

SOLUTION-FOCUSED PASTORAL COUNSELING FOR MILITARY COUPLES
EXPERIENCING POST- DEPLOYMENT TRANSITIONAL STRESS

A THESIS-PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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JANUARY 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my wife Dawn,

We have gone on many adventures together, seen the world, and raised three wonderful children. You are the model military wife and faithful follower of our Lord, who always found a way to thrive and flourish throughout it all. Thank you for your dedication to our family and for always keeping the home-fires burning. I love you!

I would rather share one lifetime with you than face all the ages of this world alone.

J.R.R. Tolkien

ABSTRACT

Solution-focused therapy is a counseling method frequently used by professional therapists assigned to the military. The strengths based, brief, and flexible nature of solution-focused therapy can easily be integrated into a Christian worldview and adapted for use by Military Chaplains. The military presents unique challenges to couples; long periods of separations, deployments, and frequent moves. Some couples experience marital strain when they reunite after a deployment. This is called post-deployment transitional stress. Chaplains can use solution-focused therapy to help couples who are experiencing post-deployment transitional stress discover spiritual strengths, increase relational resilience, and achieve greater levels of marital satisfaction.

CHAPTER ONE

MILITARY FAMILIES UNDER FIRE

Home Is Wherever I Am with You

Military families face an unusual amount of stress. Long training cycles, frequent deployments, cross-country moves, and the constant threat of an ever increasingly hostile world all produce tremendous strain and fear even on the most balanced family systems (Alder, 2012). Returning warriors bring home with them a variety of experiences and memories. For some it will be the result of trauma experienced while engaged in combat; for others it may be due to a moral or psychological injury (Shay, 1994). The vast majority, however, will simply be exhausted from enduring seven or more months of very long hours while maintaining a high state of alertness. This is referred to as Combat Operational Stress (Figley & Nash, 2007).¹ For most deploying service members, the transition home to reunite with their families will require them to learn new strategies for coping with post-deployment operational stress (Figley & Nash, 2007). Educational resources and time to adjust to “normal” will suffice for most families. Others will require some form of intervention.

The typical deployment cycle is broken up into three phases (Pavlicin, 2003): 1. Pre-deployment, 2. Deployment, 3. Post-deployment. Phase one typically begins with twelve months

1. Combat Operational Stress (COS) is defined as changes in physical or mental functioning or behavior resulting from the experience or consequences of military operations other than combat, during peacetime or war, and on land, at sea, or in the air (MCTP 3-30E, 2016, p. 1-3). Combat and Operational Stress Control is a program developed by the Navy and Marine Corps to train and empower leaders in promoting psychological health, foster resilience, prevent stress problems as much as possible, recognize when stress problems have occurred, and “eliminate the stigma associated with getting needed help” (p. 1-1). This program is designed to address not only Marines and Sailors, but also family members as well (p. 3-24). The primary means of assessment is through the Navy-Marine Corps Combat and Operational Stress Continuum Model (see Appendix).

of pre-deployment training that includes field exercises lasting anywhere from one to five weeks at a time. During this phase, Marines will enhance their combat skills training, receive mission specific educational courses, take care of medical and dental needs, update insurance policies, and ensure next of kin paperwork and wills are current. The second phase is the deployment itself. For Marines this will usually be seven to twelve months. Depending on the mission, units may be embarked in Naval ships sailing a predetermined course, or they may fly to a particular area of operations to conduct mission assignments. These deployments may be scheduled peacetime operations, emergency combat missions, or as a humanitarian response (Pavlicin, 2003). Phase three is the three- to six-month post-deployment period. During this phase leave is usually granted liberally, transition classes are offered, personnel rotate to other units, and new Marines report to the gaining command before the cycle repeats.

By the time the Marine has left for a seven-month deployment (phase two), he or she has already been away from their family anywhere from three to four months. I have heard many spouses describe this phase as “worse than the actual deployment.” Behind the sentiment is a desire just to get on with the deployment so they can get it over. The pre-deployment cycle lends itself to this kind of thinking due to the fact that life feels like a revolving door with the service member coming and going every few weeks, offering no real stability until post-deployment. Separation during the pre-deployment cycle has been described as purgatory with no real ending (Pavlicin, 2003). Whereas the actual deployment has a beginning and an ending, transitioning into a post-deployment period of dwell time, the pre-deployment cycle involves numerous short-term separations.

Like Kubler-Ross's (2014) model of the stages of grief, Pavlicin (2003) offers her own Phases and Stages of Deployment model that brings insight into the military deployment cycle families typically endure:

Phase I: Pre-deployment/Preparation

Stage 1	Shock/denial/anger
Stage 2	Anticipation of loss
Stage 3	Emotional detachment

Phase II: Deployment/Separation

Stage 4	Disorientation/depression
Stage 5	Adaptation
Stage 6	Anticipation
Stage 6 ½	(sometimes) Deployment extension

Phase III: Post-deployment/Homecoming/Reunion

Stage 7	Honeymoon
Stage 8	Reintegration

In addition to frequent deployments, the member's dependent family must endure frequent moves throughout the United States and occasionally overseas.² This means that approximately every three years, the family is packing up and moving to a different state, a new house, new neighbors, a new school, and a new church. The children show up to the new school, sometimes mid-semester, where they must make new friends, knowing full well these new relationships will only last a short period of time before moving on to the next duty station. To make matters more challenging, these Permanent Change of Station (PCS) transfers occasionally happen just a few weeks or months post-deployment, compounding the pressure to adjust not only to the returning warrior being home but also requiring the entire family to adjust to a new town, school, unit, house, neighborhood, and church (Pavlicin, 2003).

2. The Marine Corps classifies any authorized family member, typically a legally married spouse or underage child, who relies on the service member for subsistence, a dependent.

Family reactions can involve intense arguing between the service member and spouse as well as disciplinary problems with the children both at home and at school (Hoge, 2010). While the uniformed member is deployed, it is the spouse that is required to take care of everything from paying the bills, maintaining the house, taking the children to school and activities, attending little league games, and occasionally participating in command functions that are designed to help manage stress.³ Depending on the length of marriage, the spouse will learn to manage their own feelings of displacement. Not only is the service member spouse gone, but the dependent-spouse is normally far away from their own family of origin. Spouses who thrive will embrace this independence and face head-on the transitions listed above. Some spouses react to the stress of long separations by engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse, neglect or abuse of dependent children, mismanaging household income, and even having affairs. It has been my experience, as a chaplain to service members and their families, that the nature of instant communication through various forms of social media usually means that the deployed spouse's behavior will eventually find its way to the service member, and vice-versa. This usually has a negative impact on morale and increases anxiety that may or may not find a happy resolution when the service member finally returns home (Hoge, 2010).

The transition experience often reflects what Charles Hoge (2010) calls a “gap in perspectives” (p. xvi). The married military member fresh home from a tour of duty cannot possibly imagine anything that could be worse than the constant threat of combat, whereas the spouse feels they had it worse—playing both parental roles, managing the household alone, fixing things when they break, and maintaining the vehicles. Both military spouse and partner

3. The Deployment Readiness Coordinator (DRC) maintains liaison between deployed personnel and family members, and occasionally coordinates special events for families in order to provide support and build camaraderie.

have changed, grown, and matured individually; neither are the same person they were before the deployment, which can contribute to a stressful reunion (Hoge, 2010).

There are many resources that are available to the returning warrior, which largely focus on the hellish nature of war (Figley & Nash, 2007). These resources are usually aimed at men and women who have actively engaged in combat, taken lives, lost friends, or sustained injuries themselves. The premise is that combatants will find it difficult coming home to “normal life.” But the reality is that most service members will not experience actual combat. Even in today’s protracted wars in the Middle East, the vast majority of deployed service members will not be actively engaged in direct combat but instead will serve in a support role (Figley & Nash, 2007). Despite this, many will still find transitioning home comes with varying degrees of difficulty (Figley & Nash, 2007).

The deploying unit goes from intense, fast-paced, and constantly on the move, to suddenly re-deployed home, which is slower, boring, and routine. The environment has changed, but for the Marine and family, adapting to the longed-for reunion can take time to adjust. Modern travel enables military units to deploy and re-deploy quickly over just a couple days, offering little time to transition from deployment duties to life in garrison and at home. As convenient as this is, it poses additional pressure for deployed spouses and families to adjust quickly to their reunion. This is in contrast to WWII veterans who, once they were ordered home, typically took several weeks of travel by troopship. The added benefit was they had a long period of time where they were no longer in danger, could catch up on sleep and talk about their experiences with their comrades. This allowed them to decompress in preparation for life at home (Wood, 2016). The long voyage home provided a supportive quasi group-therapy for the returning service members (Grossman, 1996).

For some families, like Josh and Amanda, the transition home took a lot longer than expected. While Josh did not experience direct combat, his daily patrols through Ramadi, Iraq, required that he maintain a constant state of readiness. The year prior to Josh's deployment in 2007-08, Ramadi was like the Wild West with near daily and weekly reports of fire-fights and improvised explosive devices (IED) detonating near or under vehicles, causing catastrophic injury and death (Kukris, 2006). While the fighting had died down by his rotation, the mission-critical hyper-alertness that he maintained for seven months proved difficult to transition away from once he returned home where it was no longer required. Amanda thought it a minor inconvenience when Josh insisted on driving isolated backroads away from congested main thoroughfares that added 15 minutes to their drive, but she became particularly alarmed when he violently swerved their SUV into the next lane in order to avoid a garbage bag laying in the road.

After seeing a counselor, Josh was diagnosed with deployment-related anxiety. That garbage bag on the side of the road in Ramadi could have been an IED, and his years training for such dangerous scenarios produced reactions that were second nature. What his muscle memory had difficulty understanding was that a garbage bag on Western Boulevard in Jacksonville, NC was most likely nothing more than that, a bag full of garbage. With time, Josh was able to manage his anxiety, lessen his hypervigilance, and transition to a sense of normalcy with his wife.

Marines like Josh are not alone. Adam, who married his girlfriend just two months prior to deploying to Afghanistan, reported that the high level of alertness he maintained for most of the seven months he was in Afghanistan was difficult to lay aside when it was no longer required. He described feeling scared his first deployment. This fear kept him alert and his "head on a swivel," a skillset that came in handy for the daily four- to eight-hour patrols he conducted.

Lowering his guard was not an option, a concept that was constantly drummed into him by his senior leadership, most of whom experienced multiple combat deployments the previous decade and were eager to pass along their “lessons learned.”

After Adam’s first deployment came to a conclusion and he returned home to his wife, he was surprised to find that not only had he changed, but everyone he loved had changed as well. Even small things like a new flavored energy drink and new TV shows failed to escape him. His small town in Texas welcomed him home with a party. Many well-wishers came to visit and thank him, some even calling him a hero. After the shock and excitement of being home receded, others around him, especially his new wife, found his behavior odd and at times off-putting. A simple car backfiring or Fourth of July fireworks caused his combat-zone alertness to go into high gear, even reaching for a rifle that was no longer there. Large crowds at Walmart made him nervous, and he insisted on sitting with his back to the wall at restaurants, always near an exit. Even after his honorable discharge, returning with his wife to the same small town he grew up in and apprenticing as a pipe-fitter, he found it challenging to avoid constantly thinking through “what-if scenarios” that required a violent exit strategy. Nearly every combat outpost would have scrawled on the walls somewhere “be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet” (Ricks, 2006, para. 7). These words spoken by former Secretary of Defense James Mattis while he was Commanding General of 1st Marine Expeditionary Force sum up perfectly the warrior mindset that is taught throughout the Marine Corps (Van Horne & Riley, 2014). Years of intense training and real-world experience make it difficult, even impossible for some, to lay aside the warrior ethos for civilian life.⁴

4. Both Adam and Josh may meet the criteria for PTSD; exposure to traumatic experience, physical reactivity after traumatic reminders, avoidance of trauma-related thoughts and feelings, negative affect, feeling isolated, irritability, hypervigilance, heightened startle reaction, symptoms lasting longer than 30 days. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Everyone faces the return home differently. There is both a sense of relief when the end comes and a challenge to fit back in with a society that may or may not support the war effort. Deploying, especially to combat zones in recent years like Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom, provide a more contemporary example of these concerns. An anonymous soldier, as quoted by Adler, Bliese, and Castro (2012), offers his reflection:

Coming from combat to home is not an easy task. It's hard to explain how I feel to anyone...I have changed a lot—some for the better, some for the worse. Before Iraq I didn't have any plans or goals. Now I do. I might not be as happy as I used to be but I am getting there. Some days it's hard. (p. 153)

The transition home might be positive, negative, or a combination. How service members experience this psychological transition can have an impact on the kind of reunion experienced with their families, their individual quality of life and readiness for future deployments. Adler (2012) suggests that “it might help to normalize or predict certain transition experiences for returning service members and to train service members in specific skills to help them navigate potential transition pitfalls” (p. 154). Other recommendations include giving units time to decompress, empowering unit leaders, and encouraging returning members to craft a narrative to tell their story, especially covering events that were particularly emotional or traumatic (Adler, Bliese, & Castro, 2012). Even if these helpful suggestions are implemented, some couples will require direct intervention to help them transition.

The Homefront

Unlike most civilian counterparts, military families typically have access to a variety of helping resources to assist them with this transition. Every base includes the traditional clinics with behavioral health specialists and counselors. In recent years, the Marine Corps has hired Marine Family Life Counselors (MFLC) to imbed with their units as well as Deployment

Readiness Coordinators (DRC) (MCCS, “Unit, Personal, and Family Readiness,” para. 1). MFLCs are state licensed counselors that are available on base and are authorized to meet with families (MCCS, “Military & Family Life Counselors). They are portable and can meet families with a level of flexibility that office-based counselors do not have. This flexibility means they can meet their clients in their office, the coffee shop, the food court, or other mutually agreed upon public places. DRCs, on the other hand, are usually charged with maintaining communication between the deployed unit and family members back home, similar to the role of an Ombudsman in other organizations. They serve as a main point of contact to help navigate families through some of the confusing military resources available. Most units also have chaplains who provide spiritual support throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment cycle for both Marines and family members. Chaplains are commissioned Naval officers and are assigned to Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard units in order to provide religious support and onsite care for uniformed members. When not deployed, chaplains often meet with families under duress. Depending on the skill level of the chaplain, the care may involve brief counseling or a referral. A unique feature of military chaplain care is the requirement that absolute confidentiality be maintained (Secretary of the Navy, 2008). Whereas behavioral health specialists and MFLCs have reporting requirements consistent with any state licensing agency, military chaplains do not. This provides service members and their families with one resource that allows them to share their problems without fear of being reported.

One therapeutic method that has been gaining popularity in recent years among military counselors is solution-focused therapy (Moore, 2012). How might a military chaplain apply solution-focused counseling to a military couple experiencing transition difficulties following a deployment? With faith as a foundation, along with discovering character strengths, exploring

internal resources, strategies for coping, educational resources and homework, couples will be given the tools needed to successfully grow through the challenges military life presents. Some married service members will require additional individual care depending on symptoms and diagnosis. My primary focus in this thesis is to explore ways to provide post-deployment care to the husband and wife as a couple using solution-focused therapy.

Therapeutic Approach

Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, social workers from the Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC), who were strongly influenced by the Mental Research Institute (MRI) model in Palo Alto, CA, developed solution-focused therapy as a pragmatic alternative to the problem-focused theories in which they were trained (Nichols, 2013). Other notable solution-focus (SF) therapists include Michele Weiner-Davis, Yvonne Dolan, and Bill O'Hanlon. Dolan studied directly under de Shazer and Berg during the 1980s. O'Hanlon, a popular workshop presenter, calls his approach "Possibility Therapy" (Nichols, 2013).

According to de Shazer et al. (2007), SF is a pragmatic approach with the following major tenets guiding the process: 1. *If it isn't broken, don't fix it.* SF doesn't look for problems where none exists. If there is no problem, therapy should not continue. 2. *If it works, do more of it.* Similar to tenet 1, if strengths are already present, encouragement should be given to keep doing more of the same thing. 3. *If it's not working, do something different.* This is accomplished through asking questions about how the client behaved differently when things were improving. Conversely, if something is not working, it should be discontinued. 4. *Small steps can lead to big changes.* Improvements are encouraged and celebrated with lots of compliments. 5. *The solution is not necessarily related to the problem.* SF doesn't spend much time on the origins of the

problem or pathology. This is where SF differs from other psychotherapies, which tend to be problem-focused. In SF, the present and future are the primary focus. 6. *SF language is positive and full of possibilities*. Problem talk and past-history discussions tend to be overly negative and unhelpful, often reinforcing the issue needing resolution. Solution language is emphasized, allowing the client to transcend the problem. 7. *Problems don't happen all the time, there are exceptions*. These exceptions are discovered through asking questions about what was different when the problem was not present. 8. *The future is negotiable*. People aren't locked in or defined by a psychological diagnosis but are motivated by a hopeful future. Individuals have the power to change their destiny.

SF emphasizes the fact that people are limited by their narrow view of their problems and are continuously implementing solutions that do not work; more punishments, and more talks (Nichols, 2013). Unlike problem-focused models, SF considers the client to be the expert, not the counselor. It is the client who defines the goals of treatment and sets the agenda (Bannink, 2010). As the expert, the client also knows the solution or solutions. He or she knows what is needed and already has within themselves the solution to their problem. The therapist, however, as a gentle guide, might nudge the client toward the conclusion that what they are currently doing is not working, encouraging him or her to consider other solutions.

There is no single way of nudging the client through one problem or another, so whatever works best for this client or that family may or may not be desirable for another family or client, making SF a very pragmatic approach to therapy. Throughout the therapeutic process, the counselor remains non-judgmental, maintaining a positive and collegial stance toward the client, leading from behind with a gentle nudge toward positive solutions to help the client reach their stated goal (de Shazer et al., 2007). This is reminiscent of Carl Roger's (1992) principle of

unconditional positive regard, where people are valued and respected as free agents who are doing their best to rise above their situations.

Once the problem is stated and goals are defined, the therapist's role then is to partner with the client to discover solutions. This is accomplished, in part, by asking questions, looking for previous solutions and exceptions. An exception would be an example of when the problem could have occurred but did not. For example, a couple who complains of frequent fights after the military member spouse returns from a deployment but remembers a moment the day before when they had a nice conversation at dinner without arguing. What was different during that conversation when they got along? How did they know it was different? What exactly did they do that was different and made the conversation more pleasant (Bannink, 2010)? When couples are stuck, often it is because they have forgotten to do the things that worked.

A common feature in SF in helping clients state their goals is the so-called "miracle question" (Macdonald, 2011), which may be posed something like this:

I'd like to ask you a strange question: suppose you go to bed tonight as usual, and while you are asleep a miracle happens, and the problem that brought you here today is solved. But you are asleep and do not know that the miracle has happened; what will be the first small signs when you wake up in the morning that the miracle has happened and that the problem is solved (p. 21)?

While the miracle question is a key component of SF, it is merely a tool used to define the goal and purpose of therapy. An alternative way to ask might include, "If I were to wave a magic wand and your problems were gone, what would you notice that was different?" Another way to reframe it might be to ask the client what they would like a video of their life five years from now to look like (Macdonald, 2011).

An important intervention tool used in SF is scaling questions. Scaling questions are used during the initial session to gauge the seriousness of the problem as well as make goals for future

sessions and track progress. Richard, a Marine I met with while deployed to Norway, was struggling with homesickness and missing his wife whom he married the previous year. I asked him on a scale of zero to ten (zero being the worst homesickness he has ever felt and ten being no homesickness at all) where he believed he fell. “Right now, I guess I’m at a three or a four,” he replied. Follow-up questions and further discussion explored what realistic goals to set in order to get to five and six. Deployments usually have fixed timelines, so getting to ten was impossible and unrealistic until we redeployed home. However, asking how he would know things were different when he moved up to five and who else would notice things were different prompted Richard to share how when he’s less homesick he is better able to focus on his job and he drinks less on his time off. His fellow Marines would know he was fine when he was back to joking and finding humor in situations. Richard’s demeanor changed for the better when he realized that he only had ten more days until he could go home, making him feel more hopeful and empowering him to find the strength to continue.

While many therapeutic approaches spend considerable time exploring the causes of the problem, solution-focused therapists don’t believe this is always necessary (Bannink, 2011). SF focuses on reinforcing positive behavior by helping their clients see that their problems have “exceptions,” those moments when their problems are not problems. Focusing on these exceptions shows that a coping strategy already exists within the client’s repertoire. Included within this approach is a series of questions that focuses on present problems and future goals.

SF as a therapeutic approach for Christian couples in the military who are in need of help finds a great deal of support from scripture. Of all psychotherapies, SF seems to me to be one of the most compatible with the Bible. It is also accessible to pastors and chaplains with limited clinical training. Focusing on positive self-talk and encouraging change, however

incremental, is consistent with the biblical emphases on sanctification and the church's role in providing spiritual direction. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians writes,

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).⁵

Consistent with SF, Paul doesn't dwell much on the past, but instead focuses on the hope of the future. He acknowledges his present imperfection while maintaining a positive disposition toward what he believes his future holds, a positive change which he calls "the prize." Jesus also emphasized this idea of forward thinking and not dwelling on the past when he said, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62), albeit in a manner that proponents of SF would probably find too negative (Kollar, 2011).

The hopeful stance presented by the SF approach is one Christians ought to feel comfortable with. For the believer, there is always reason to be hopeful in Christ. Paul stated as much when he wrote, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Of course, hope for the future does not exempt believers from suffering or enduring common trials. The difference for followers of Christ is that difficulties are never without purpose, but are finite in duration, and serve to mold our character (Romans 5:3-5).

Stephen Covey (1989) suggests that successful people

begin with the end in mind.... To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction. (p. 89)

5. Except where notated, all scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version of the Holy Bible.

Believers, when discouraged or feeling hopeless, might do well to begin with the end by rereading John's vision of a New Jerusalem and New Earth found in Revelation 21:1-4, where it is said that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

A future-oriented hopefulness was particularly helpful for Viktor Frankl, the German psychiatrist imprisoned by the Nazis in a concentration camp. "The prisoner who had lost faith in the future—his future—was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold" (Frankl, 2006, p. 74). When he was suffering, cold, hungry, and limping to the worksite, he would imagine himself at the university giving a lecture behind a podium. "By this method I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already past" (p. 73). This future-oriented-hopefulness saved his life. Martin Seligman (2002), the founder of the positive psychology movement, affirms something similar by focusing on optimism and the strengths of the client and the assumption that character strengths are not just the result of the right genes or luck, but are already present and can be developed.

The nature of how we speak about our problems is also addressed in this approach. "Problem talk" is often past-centered and negative, resigned to permanence. Solution language is much more positive, hopeful, and future-oriented. While the past is fixed, the future is filled with possibilities and hope. The therapist's job is to help clients see these possibilities by focusing on hopeful solutions, rather than problem talk (Nichols, 2013). How a person talks about their problems is very important. SF understands that positive talk will lead to positive behavioral changes and habits. As such, the therapist will avoid confronting the client, but instead focus on positive gains made, however big or small, by the client. Solution-focused therapy avoids

speculating about the past or problem formation, seeing that solutions are “often unrelated to the way problems developed” (Nichols, 2013). Giving labels and diagnosing problems only encourages more problem talk, so it is to be avoided if possible.

To summarize, military families, if they are to thrive, must find positive coping strategies to help them endure the rigors and unique challenges of military service, in particular the stress of adjusting to life together following long periods of separation. To assist couples in their adjustment, solution-focused therapy is presented as a possible approach. In chapter two, I will review the biblical and theological material which support this approach to post-deployment care.

CHAPTER TWO

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The Union of Heaven and Earth

The story of the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. In Genesis, God joins Adam and Eve together, performing what was essentially the first human marriage (Genesis 2:22-25, Keller, 2010). The last book of the Bible, Revelation, culminates with the marriage supper of the Lamb, the union of Christ and His church. The Apostle John in his apocalyptic vision cries out with great joy, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made herself ready, it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” (19:6-8). Paul also hinted at this glorious moment while explaining that marriage, while a temporary human institution with regulations, really points to the mystical union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32).¹ The purpose and meaning of marriage, therefore, is not only for human intimacy, but also spiritually symbolizes the *beatific vision*, that moment when God’s people will know Him intimately, face to face, and see Him as He is (I Corinthians 13:12, I John 3:2).

The Apostle John further describes the moment of this union of heaven and earth when wrote that he

saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with humanity. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

1. See also Matthew 22:23-46 where Jesus explains that marriage is only for the present age.

God's work of redemption is a story of complementary unions; man and woman, heaven and earth, Christ and the Church (Wright, 2011).

With this in mind, the heart of any Christian marriage values God not only as the giver of this blessing but also as the primary fulfilment of the spiritual meaning of marriage. Marital intimacy between a man and woman, repeated countless times throughout human history, ultimately finds eschatological fulfillment in the intimacy experienced between the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church (Keller, 2010).

The Presbyterian Book of Common Worship (1993) tells us that God “gave us marriage for the well-being of human society” (p. 884). The Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1990) likewise asserts that “the union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy” (p. 423). While civil laws throughout history have determined the legalities of marriage with regard to property rights and inheritance laws, undergirded by the assumption that marriage evolved as a social construct, the Bible teaches that marriage was designed by God to bring joy to His creation (Keller, 2010). Marriage, from the start, was God's initiative, which a traditional wedding service acknowledges when the presiding minister states that “marriage was instituted by God, regulated by his commandments, and blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Hutton, 2003, p. 22). Because of the solemnity and divine origin of the institution of marriage, those who enter therein should be fully informed of God's purposes, which include intimacy, reciprocal love, bearing fruit, communal involvement, as well as regulatory requirements (Keller, 2010).

Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve together were made in the “image of God,” making humans unique among all of God's creation (Genesis 1:27). The church has long wrestled with what it means to be made in God's image (Kilner, 2015). While the Scriptures do not explicitly

define the *imago dei*, the essence of this key theological concept can mean no less than the foundational view that all of humanity is supremely valuable to God, worthy of respect and dignity, devoid of oppression and exploitation (Kilner, 2015). Divine-image-bearing humans also retain the ability to freely and consciously live before their Creator (Psalm 16:9, Micah 6:8, Ephesians 2:10). Jones (2006), calls this our “Genesis identity, which tells us that we were created for a special purpose and that we have a special relationship with our Creator” (p. 20).

It is this innate desire for relationship and community that warrants special consideration. Not long after God created Adam, he declared that “it was not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18), so he created Eve and joined the two together to become one, uniting them in the first marriage, partnering together to care for the garden and to raise children. “The couple was to be united, both physically and in community. God was to be the central focus for the individual and for the community at both the family and society level” (Jones, 2006). In solemnizing this special union, the Bible states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24-25, KJV). This sacred statement of blessing, affirmed by both Jesus and Paul (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, I Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 5:31) acknowledges the differentiation that takes place throughout the cycle of “leaving and cleaving.” Men and women leave their family of origin to marry one another, produce children, who in turn grow to maturity and enter into their own marriages, producing children, thus continuing the cycle and furthering God’s plan and purposes (Balswick & Balswick, 2014).

Genesis 2:25 mentions Adam and Eve’s nakedness before their God as a symbol not just of a pre-fallen state of innocence, but also of the special and unique intimacy that is found in the marital union and communion with God. After blessing the union of the first couple (Genesis

1:28), He gives them His first command: “be fruitful and multiply.” The fruit of this unique marital intimacy is the continuation of the divine-image-bearing human family. Bruce Milne (2009) writes that “a further and critical feature of the man-woman relationship is its expression in sexual union. In this act of profoundest, loving, mutual self-giving, the man and woman enter into a [physical] union,” producing unique, newborn humans (p. 33). Milne (2009) further states that “the Bible sees the sexual relationship as a supreme gift of God, the good Creator, and as both a profound vehicle of mutual love and pleasure, and the means to human procreation” (p. 133). The children produced through this unique act of mutual self-giving become a family unit.

The family unit provides not only the deepest level of intimacy for the husband and wife, it also affords the necessary environment for raising children; providing love, safety, and nourishment, resulting in the potential for maximal flourishing. From within the family unit, children grow from complete dependence and attachment to gradual levels of detachment and independence, eventually maturing into well-developed adults capable of entering into their own marital dyads (Balswick & Balswick, 2014; Marrone, 2014).

A Christian theology of family can be understood in light of the doctrine of the Trinity, which serves as the prime example of the kind of intimacy and interdependence God had in mind when He created humanity (Balswick & Balswick, 2014). God, though eternal and infinitely powerful, is also relational, coexisting as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19, John 1:1-4, 14:16-17, 14:9-11, Ephesians 4:4-6, Philippians 2:5-8, Colossians 1:15-17). The implication that follows from God’s triune nature is that for all of eternity He has existed in community from within. Even before He created the heavens and the earth and humanity, God enjoyed perfect communion from within

the Trinity. Because of this, God has never been alone and has continuously experienced interdependency (Jones, 2006; Schaeffer, 1972).

God's triune nature demonstrates both intimate union as well as differentiation (Balswick 2014). By way of analogy, human family relationships, according to Balswick & Balswick, "reflect relationality within the Holy Trinity" (2014, p. 4). The Bible's "one flesh" description of the marital union is analogous of the Trinity. Couples in the marital dyad become one with each other yet maintain their individuality. Jones (2006) states that "we have both separateness and unity in our relationships. Each person has an individual identity. God created a single man...who was a unique individual with a personality separate from Eve" (p. 20). Adam was separate in identity from Eve, but they were united in marriage to each other and in relationship to their Creator. This unity in diversity within the family unit further expands when children are born. Families, though made up of distinct individuals are united in purpose, love and support one another. Shedding more light on this subject, Wayne Grudem (1994) notes,

The fact that God created two distinct persons as male and female, rather than just one man, is part of our being the image of God because it can be seen to reflect to some degree the plurality of persons within the Trinity...just as there was fellowship and communication and sharing of glory among the members of the Trinity before the world was made, so God made Adam and Eve in such a way that they would share love and communication and mutual giving of honor to one another in their interpersonal relationship. (p. 455)

Of course, marriage and family have important differences to the Trinity. Married individuals are one by covenant, not nature, whereas God is one by nature (Deuteronomy 6:4). God creates *ex nihilo*, humans procreate (Genesis 1:1, 2:28, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 4:11). Unity and diversity are perfectly functional from within the Godhead, but human relationships are marred by sin and disfunction, which will be further discussed below (Balswick & Balswick, 2014).

Relationality is reflected in the Trinity and is the core understanding of family relationships (Balswick & Balswick, 2014). While perfect relationality is on display within the Triune God, human relationships must work, conform, and “look to God for grace and strength to attain personal distinction in relationships” (Balswick & Balswick, p. 5). Anderson (2012) further explains that “family relationships, whether parent/child, husband/wife, brother/sister, or any other special bonding relationship, are reflections of the covenant relationships that exist within the Godhead and are reflected in the relationship between God and humankind and between human persons as they are created in the image of God” (p. 47).

An essential attribute of God, directly related to his personhood, is love. John tells us that God is by nature “love” (1 John 4:7-12). Love, broadly defined, is committing oneself to the ultimate benefit of the person receiving love (Grudem, 1994). This kind of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is perfectly reciprocal and self-giving. *Agape* is the Greek word most often associated with this kind of love. Divine love serves as an example for how humans are to relate to one another in all forms of community; church, neighborhood, family. While God’s love is perfect and unending, human love is imperfect, full of error, wrought with conditions (Grudem, 1994).

Human beings, though created in the image of God, took a disastrous turn after Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator. The consequences of Adam and Eve’s disobedience produced environmental corruption, relational disharmony, communal dysfunction, disorder, exile, and ultimately death. Worse still, Adam and Eve’s sin brought condemnation and separation from their Creator (Jones, 2006). Though depraved, they still retained their unique place within God’s creation, but now this existence would be marked by blood, sweat, and many tears (Genesis 3:1-24).

The family system, modeled on God Himself, would now be challenged by many difficulties; from blame-shifting and selfishness to violence and even fratricide. Adam's first instinct when confronted by God in the garden was to blame his wife: "This woman you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). The consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience proved tragic after their first-born son, Cain, murdered his brother Abel in a fit of jealous rage (Genesis 4:1-16). Whereas the attachment and enmeshment within the Holy Trinity is perfect, human relationships, as seen here and throughout human history, are fraught with disorder and communal conflict. Balswick & Balswick (2014) define sin as

The condition of failing to be in proper relationship with self, others, and God. Brokenness in relationship is the heart of human sin. Thus, the goals of child development from a Christian point of view are realized in capturing a sense of the relationality in the divine Trinity, as exemplified in covenant love, grace, empowerment, and intimacy modeled by God for us in the Old and New Testaments. (p. 138)

Jones (2006) calls the confrontation of Adam by God the "first crisis counseling intervention in human history" (p. 31). This intervention began with the question of locale: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Adam and Eve, after they sinned, hid from the presence of God (Genesis 3:8). This intervention question was asked by God not because He lacked knowledge of their whereabouts, but for the benefit of Adam and Eve. They lost their bearings and they needed to know the extent of their lostness. The question is relevant to all of humanity as well. It indicates that there is a relational breakdown with our Creator. Adam and Eve, like all of humanity and especially those seeking counseling must likewise answer God's question of locale—"where are you?"—with honesty and candor. Jones (2006, pp. 33-34) explains that there are three dimensions of location:

1. Location in Relationship to Self.
2. Location in Relationship to Others.

3. Location in Relationship to God.

Adam and Eve, and all of humanity by extension (Romans 5:12), have lost their bearings with regard to self, others, and God. Because of humanity's fallenness, we no longer know where we are and require God's help in finding our way back. Adam's self-understanding became ego-centric and selfish. His motives were now impure, no longer desiring to serve God, but instead desiring to protect himself, he covered his own sin with deflection and animal skins. The result of the fall also brought about a breakdown in relationship to others. This is evident in Adam blaming his wife for eating the fruit she gave him. It is also seen in Cain killing Abel, and the countless struggles that all humans have in relating to others. Ultimately the answer to the spiritual location of humanity before God is separation, as evident in the exile from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23-24). The serpent's word became more trustworthy than God's word and idolatry would become the fruit of this deceit (Genesis 3:1, Romans 1:21-25). Because of the Fall, humans are lost in relationship to self, others and God. The blessing of God was now mingled with a curse. What God had intended as a harmonious unity with Himself at the center of human life is now discolored by distorted lenses of self-centeredness and disordered realities (Jones, 2006).

Despite this, God has redeemed fallen humanity, the institution of marriage, and the family through the Gospel of Christ. Though tarnished by sin, the value of humanity and creation was nevertheless retained. God's plan of restoring disordered humanity was set in motion immediately after Adam and Eve sinned when he promised that Eve's descendent would "bruise your [the serpent's] head" (Genesis 3:15). This redemptive act of God in history continued through the calling of Abraham, whom God promised through covenant to give him offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky, on through the Exodus of Abraham's descendants out of Egypt,

the giving of the Law through Moses, and the establishment of the House of David (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:4-20, 17:1-14, Exodus 19:5-6, 20:2, II Samuel 7:1-17).

Though God called Israel to Himself and confirmed His relationship with them with covenants, Israel had a tendency to wander into disobedience, breaking the covenant, and experiencing God's judgment. Throughout this cycle of disobedience, God is portrayed as always calling Israel back to Himself with offers of forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption. The book of Hosea serves as an example of this continuous cycle of covenant breaking and God's patient love in wanting Israel to return to Him. Hosea's own marital unhappiness with his unfaithful wife, Gomer, illustrated Israel's unfaithfulness toward God and God's intention to take Israel (1:1-4, 2:2-13, 14:1-9). Hosea's taking back his wife parallels God's frequent taking-back of Israel and promise of redemption (Gaebeleine, 1985).

This promise of redemption was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, who, as the promised Messiah and redeemer, entered into our world and removed the guilt of sin by way of the cross, declaring victory over death through his own death and resurrection (Matthew 5:17-18, John 1:1-3, 14, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, 2 Corinthians 5:21). The fruit of this is a calling out of from among the world a distinct community of redeemed people who trust in God by faith called the "church." God's plan was always to have a people unto himself, from Abraham's physical descendants forming the nation of Israel, to the spiritual descendants from among the nations by way of faith in Christ through the new covenant (Genesis 17:1-8, Deuteronomy 7:6, Luke 22:20, Galatians 3:7-9).

This "new covenant" in His blood (Luke 22:20, Matthew 26:27, 1 Corinthians 11:26, Mark 14:23) is entirely initiated by God's sovereign will and grace, by faith, apart from works of righteousness (John 5:24, 17:3, Acts 4:12, 16:30-31, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 2:8, 9-10, 2

Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:16, 1 John 4:19-21). Christ, as the second Adam, perfectly fulfills the demands of God's law, justifying the sinner, removing condemnation, offering divine peace (Matthew 5:17-18, Romans 5:1-2, 8:3-4)

Furthermore, the work of God in redeeming humanity is continued through the Holy Spirit, also known as the comforter and counselor (John 14:26). The Spirit of God is active in the lives of his people in transforming them from darkness to light, helping bring sincere and permanent change with the goal of becoming like Christ in every way (Romans 8:9-17, Galatians 5:22-23). The work of redemption is a gift from God, brought about entirely by grace, achieving not only divine pardon and forgiveness, resulting in reconciliation, but also outward righteousness. Because of this, humans in general, and married couples in particular, can look forward to a positive future, one filled with possibilities (Kollar, 2011). John Piper (2006) refers to this as "Future Grace," where individuals, as well as married couples are empowered by the Holy Spirit to put faith into action (James 2:14-26). Piper (2006) explains,

By "future" I do not merely mean the grace of heaven and the age to come. I mean the grace that begins now, this very second, and sustains your life to the end of this paragraph. By "grace" I do not merely mean the pardon of God in passing over your sins, but also the power and beauty of God to keep you from sinning. (p. 5)

Biblical grace, therefore, includes both divine love, apart from individual merit, and divine empowerment to endure and overcome.

The grace and forgiveness of God are vital realities to experience not only in restoring the divine/human relationship, but also by extension, human/human relationships, especially in the context of marriage and family. Ian Jones' (2006) summary of the lostness of humanity (self, others, God) is remedied by the grace and forgiveness of God. Successful marriages are full of this kind of grace, eager to forgive wrongs, and love unconditionally (Worthington, 2014). Because God no longer holds our sins against us but freely gives us life, we are now empowered

to forgive our spouses of past hurts. By faith, even the most disastrous unions can become a reflection of the redemptive love of God in Christ by drawing strength from the Holy Spirit and allowing the Bible to transform and renew their minds. Past hurts may need to be dealt with accordingly and forgiveness offered, but renewal and reconciliation offers the hope of moving forward with a fresh start and a new perspective (Worthington, 2014).

Jesus on numerous occasions summarized the law as loving God and loving one's neighbor. Loving God and loving one's neighbor are the first and second greatest commandments (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Matthew 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-31, John 13:34-35, 15:12, 15:17). Love as a command and obligation of forgiven Christ followers is a recurring theme—perhaps the premier theme of the New Testament (Romans 13:8, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9, Hebrews 13:1, 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8, 1 John 4:7, 4:11-12, 2 John 5). Love is at the heart of the divine/human and human/human relationship. God's forgiveness of his covenant people obligates them to extend the same forgiveness to others (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-22, Luke 6:37, 17:3-4). This obligation to love and forgive is extended even to couples and families who are being renewed by the grace of God.

Paul described this new reality to the church at Corinth when he declared that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (II Corinthians 5:17). Corinth struggled with many serious problems. Yet, despite their struggle, Paul reminds them that they are not defined by their struggles, but by who they are in Christ. By taking hold of their new identity (forgiven, loved children of God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ), they are then empowered to orient themselves toward actually living out their destiny (Kollar, 2011). For individual recipients who are empowered by these promises of God, the institution of marriage becomes something more than a contract. It becomes a covenant.

Marriage as covenant is a parable or pattern of the covenant between God and humanity. The Abrahamic covenant, followed by the covenant between God and Israel, began with God's election of the Hebrew people which was rooted in God's faithfulness and grace toward the people whom He chose. The Old Testament often portrays God "as the faithful spouse who will not abandon his beloved," calling his beloved back from unfaithfulness (Anderson, 2012, p. 44, Jeremiah 3:12, 4:1, Ezekiel 16:59-60, Hosea 2:16-17, 2:19-20, Isaiah 54:5-8). Despite the unfaithfulness and conditional obedience of God's covenant people, Israel, God always remains faithful. His faithfulness is rooted in His unconditional love for His beloved.

Viewing marriage in terms of a covenant to be patterned on God's covenant with His people gives newly married, as well as seasoned partners, resources and strengths that are unavailable to couples who are only contractually espoused (Anderson, 2012). These resources and strengths come directly from the presence of God in the relationship. God's modeling of faithfulness toward us, despite our tendency to sin, is the example on which a marital covenant should be patterned. God's unconditional love and forgiveness of our sins challenges couples to imitate this example within their marriage. When challenges arise and threaten to bring ruin, as they will on occasion, "those who are prepared to be covenant partners and have indeed entered into the creation of marriage and family will not long be detained by such ruins, but will continue to build a new style and a new place" (Anderson, 2012 p. 45). This is accomplished through repenting from behavior that harms the relationship, graciously offering forgiveness, and continuing to build on the covenantal union a sure foundation of love. Living like this will enable couples to thrive and flourish as God intended.

One of the more prominent passages in Scripture that addresses how couples can thrive and flourish comes from Ephesians 5:21-33:

Submit[...] to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The Apostle Paul details God's purpose of marriage and gives insight in how to thrive and flourish as a couple and family. Paul's instructions are profound in light of the modern emphases on self-fulfillment and "finding your soulmate," which often leads to unfulfillment and frustration, leaving children casualties of the divorce wars (Keller, 2011). Paul simply instructs couples first to "submit to one another" (v. 21). Entering into marriage requires a surrendering of wills. While each are to surrender to one another, Paul encourages wives specifically to submit to their husbands, which is clearly counter-cultural and even offensive by today's standards. Nevertheless, Christian couples cannot dismiss it because of the Trinitarian model Paul points to as the primary example of how this mutual self-giving relationship works. Furthermore, as part of this mutual surrender, Paul instructs husbands to love their wives sacrificially, pointing to the cross of Christ as the supreme example of this kind of sacrificial giving love.

Paul completes his discourse by stating that the union between a man and woman is a "profound mystery" pointing to union between Christ and the church. This mutual submission and sacrificial love are voluntarily given within the marriage covenant as a way to thrive and flourish as a couple and working out order from within the marital relationship. Paul's words of instruction are directed individually to the husband and wife as voluntary acts of love and

submission toward one another, implying that each partner should not take it upon themselves to make demands. How exactly these principles are manifested should be left to individual couples, without societal or ecclesial coercion to work out as they are led by the Spirit of God.

Paul's emphasis on sacrificial love is of particular note. Misunderstanding the nature of love and the purpose of marriage have been met with intense disappointment and disillusion. Once the newness of marriage has given way to the realities of life, most couples soon discover the folly in searching for the perfect soulmate who completely fulfills one's every need. The stark reality is that we never marry the right person and no two people are completely compatible (Keller, 2011). Stanley Hauerwas (1978) made a similar point when he said,

Destructive to marriage is the self-fulfillment ethic that assumes marriage and the family are primarily institutions of personal fulfillment, necessary for us to become "whole" and happy. The assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough we will find the right person. This moral assumption overlooks a crucial aspect to marriage. It fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person. We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage, being [the enormous thing it is] means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary problem is...learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you first find yourself married.

This doesn't mean we ignore extreme differences in personality or compatibility factors. Major differences in religion, life goals, social backgrounds can be problematic. Despite this, even the most compatible couples will find marriage challenging to navigate.

The intense nature of marriage requires that we look for something more than modern storybook sentimentality. Knitting together two hearts that are in constant flux is part of the challenge. People change. The spouse we married a year ago will be different than the one we are living with today, next year, fifty years from now. Military couples and others who experience long separations are keenly aware of the change they encounter when they reunite. Instead of growing and adapting to the small, subtle changes over time, military couples must

relearn how to live with one another all over again after long separations where large changes have occurred.

Operational rhythms of modern military units rarely factor in the personal lives of individual service members; newness of marriage, newborn babies, important family events. Deuteronomic law, however, made provisions for the recently engaged to first get married and spend time at home (Deuteronomy 20:7), and if they are newlyweds, the husband is exempt from the draft or any public duties. “He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken” (24:5). Modern American military law makes no such provision, but unlike our own recent history and much of ancient history, we depend upon an all-volunteer military as opposed to a national draft. The reason for these laws is that war affects relationships and extended periods of separation will affect couples from one degree to another.

David serves as a Biblical example of someone who experienced difficulty in balancing his professional life as a soldier and his family life. David was described as “a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him” (I Samuel 16:18-19). He had all the qualities of the noble, warrior-poet, romanticized by young women who wrote songs glorifying his battlefield prowess; “Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands” (I Samuel 18:7). The war didn’t end for David on the battlefield. Being son-in-law to the jealous King Saul meant no restful reunion with his wife, Michal, who, along with her brother Jonathan, assisted in his escape from the deadly wrath of her father (I Samuel 18:6-20:42).

Later on, once David had established his own kingdom in the land of Israel, he would face other challenges as well as personal failures. On one occasion, when his men were off to war, he decided to stay home. While home he sexually exploits a married woman, whose

husband was away fighting David's war, resulting in her pregnancy. After failing to convince her husband, who had returned from the battle at his request, to go home and sleep with her, he sends him to the front lines to ensure his death and takes his pregnant widow as his wife. His coverup was exposed by the prophet Nathan, who confronted David's sin. David, for his part, repented and confessed his sin to God. God, in his mercy, removed the sin but promised that the sword would never depart from the House of David (II Samuel 12:1-25). While David received divine forgiveness, he was not exempt from the consequences.

David's indiscretions, including his failure to accompany his soldiers in war, certainly would have been whispered about among the men, resulting in confusion, feelings of betrayal, loss of faith, and what we today call "moral injury" (Figley & Nash, 2007, Shay, 1994). Wood (2016), broadly defines moral injury as a

jagged disconnect from our understanding of who we are and what we and others ought to do and ought not to do. Experiences that are common in war—inflicting purposeful violence, witnessing the sudden violent maiming of a loved buddy, the suffering of civilians—challenge and often shatter our understanding of the world as a good place where good things should happen to us, the foundational beliefs we learn as infants. The broader loss of trust, loss of faith, loss of innocence, can have enduring psychological, spiritual, social, and behavioral impact. (p. 8)

David's own indiscretion resulted in a self-inflicted moral injury, while feelings of betrayal among his soldiers produced a different kind of moral injury, as well as possible moral injury among his soldiers who fought honorably, but most likely suffered psychologically and spiritually in some way. Moreover, David's spectacular public moral failures as a leader likely played a role in setting off a chain of events that impacted his family negatively (II Samuel 13-18).

Power can corrupt even the most pious, and soldiers like David throughout all of human history are aware of this. Credibility and state sanctioned power are on full display with the

soldier. Paul acknowledges this when he ascribed divine authority to governing agencies who wield the sword (Romans 13:1-7). Laws are meant to be obeyed and among the people are those appointed to enforce those laws, sometimes with great consequences to those who break them. Unfortunately, the temptation to use those positions of power for personal gain or unholy agendas is too powerful for some to overcome, whether it be a King like David, or a common soldier or law enforcement official patrolling the streets. This is why John the Baptist instructed inquiring Roman soldiers to “not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14). Military service is not forbidden for believers, but for those who do serve, they are expected to serve honorably. Maintaining a strong ethic and moral grounding while separated from family can contribute to the resiliency of the marriage once reunited. Some individual service members will still struggle to reintegrate for various reasons (Figley & Nash, 2007).

To process the negative effects of war, the Hebrew Scriptures prescribed various rituals for returning soldiers (Kelle, 2014). Those rituals involved the division of plunder, processions, singing, laments, burials, cultic sacrifice, as well as cleansing rites (Genesis 14:17-24, Exodus 15:1-18, 17:14-16, Numbers 31:19-54, I Samuel 18:6-9, II Samuel 1:19-27, Psalm 44). While nothing can erase the memories of the horror of bloodshed, these rituals served as a means of reintegrating Israelite soldiers back into their families, tribes, and broader community. Even the church during medieval times “required soldiers to do various kinds of penance as a means of purification, expiation, and return to the community, even when the war was considered just” (Kelle, 2014). Other medieval church requirements sometimes included abstaining from communion, certain foods, and church gatherings for a period of time. Modern scholars have rediscovered the value in participating in post-deployment rituals to mitigate

against the effects of warfare in order to process combat related losses and mitigate the effects of “moral injury” (Shay 1994, Wood, 2016).

Stephen Joseph (2011) highlights religious activity in particular as a helpful means for dealing with the emotional turmoil of trauma and promoting what he terms “post-traumatic-growth” (p. xvi). He notes that many religious adherents reported an intensification and deepening of their faith commitments after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (p. 124). The reason people who are deeply religious might find strength to endure rather than despair is due to the fact that churches and other religious-based communities tend to be social, providing ready-made sources of support for members who are suffering (Joseph, 2011, pp. 124-25). Examples of social support provided for hurting members might include prayer chains, pastoral visits, encouraging cards, and so forth. While not all churches are capable of providing needed support as Joseph (2011) suggests, some churches, like my own, partner with area professionals and offer PTSD support groups and Celebrate Recovery meetings. A secondary explanation for how religious commitment promotes resiliency and post-trauma-growth is that it gives people a sense of meaning and a worldview from which to reframe positive experiences as blessing while reframing negative experiences as opportunities for spiritual and personal growth (Joseph, 2011). One biblical example of reframing a traumatic experience is found in Genesis 50:19-21, after Joseph, whose years in slavery and imprisonment and subsequent political fortune enabled him to provide for his family during a severe famine. In comforting his brothers, he said “as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Joseph ascribed meaning to his suffering, which resulted in a greater good. In addition to social support and purpose, religious adherents also find comfort in

rituals such as memorial services, communion, baptism, community prayer, and worship services.

In conclusion, God created human beings, who are made in His image, to be in relationship with Himself and one another. The institution of marriage is a blessing from God for the happiness, welfare, and perpetuity of humanity. The triune nature of God serves as a pattern for relationships and living in community. The covenant of marriage also spiritually symbolizes the intimate relationship between Christ and the church, foreshadowing the *beatific vision*. Though sin has caused humanity to lose its bearing, God in His faithfulness has brought about redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ. Married couples can thrive and flourish by imitating the humility and sacrificial love of Christ, extending the same kind of forgiveness to one another that they have received from God. Service members who happen to be married can draw strength from the Scriptures and from their church communities to help them endure challenges associated with military service. In Chapter Three, I will be surveying literature that discusses Solution-Focused Therapy as it is used among members of the military.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Weiss, Coll, Gerbauer, Smiley, & Carillo (2010) observe that military life and culture present both strengths and challenges (p. 397). Service members from all branches of the military are indoctrinated in basic core values that include honor, courage, commitment, loyalty, and integrity. Additionally, the military highly values both mental and physical toughness as well as strict adherence to one's immediate chain of command and mission priority (Weiss, et al., p. 397). These indoctrinated values "could be recognized as viable coping mechanisms and thus be used to enhance resiliency in the family" (Weiss, et al., 2010, p. 397). Challenges include frequent deployments and family separations, stigma toward mental illness, which is seen as a weakness leading to reluctance toward seeking mental health services (Weiss, et al., 2010, p. 397).

Families must cope with the effects of the returning service member's combat related stress, which may include transitional adjustment issues, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and other combat related injuries (Weiss, et al., p. 397). Further complicating matters, service members with maladaptive coping strategies sometimes turn to substance abuse (usually alcohol) resulting in family conflict (Weiss, et al., p. 397). If not handled properly, service members may face various disciplinary actions from their respective unit, including administrative separation, which will directly impact the spouse and children who depend on them for support (Weiss, et al., p. 397).

A term that has gained popularity within the military for facing challenges and successfully navigating stress is "resilience," which is defined as "the process by which people

manage not only to endure hardships but also to create and sustain lives that have meaning and contribute to those around them” (Weiss, et al., p. 397). Resilience is drawn from within the individual as well as from the surrounding environment. Key components of resiliency include the ability to overcome the odds, sustained competence, and recovery from trauma. Protective factors that buffer against various risks include intelligence, positive outlook, personality traits, having supportive and loving parents, and an environment that is safe and encouraging (Weiss, et al., 2010). According to Van Hook (2008), three components contribute to family resilience: belief systems (meaning making and appraisals of situations), organizational patterns (degree of flexibility, cohesiveness, leadership), and communication processes (openness, collaborative problem solving, sense of humor).

Military families, despite the unique challenges, also have many strengths to rely on; regular and stable income, housing, health insurance, as well as support systems that include deployment readiness coordinators (DRC), chaplains, military family life counselors (MFLC), along with a variety of educational and social support services (Weiss, et al., 2010, p. 398). Families as a whole demonstrate “exceptional strengths such as adaptability, flexibility, willingness to make new friends, loyalty to the service, multitasking, and competent parenting skills” which are developed when the service member is deployed and the dependent spouse becomes a temporary single parent (p. 398).

To help identify these strengths and promote resiliency, Weiss, et al. (2010) suggest solution-focused therapy (SF). Military life and culture value solutions rather than problems, courage, unity, mental and physical strength, making SF a compatible psychotherapy (Weiss, et al., 2010, p. 398). The SF approach works well with military members and families due to the emphases on the client’s past successes (i.e., completion of bootcamp, previous deployments,

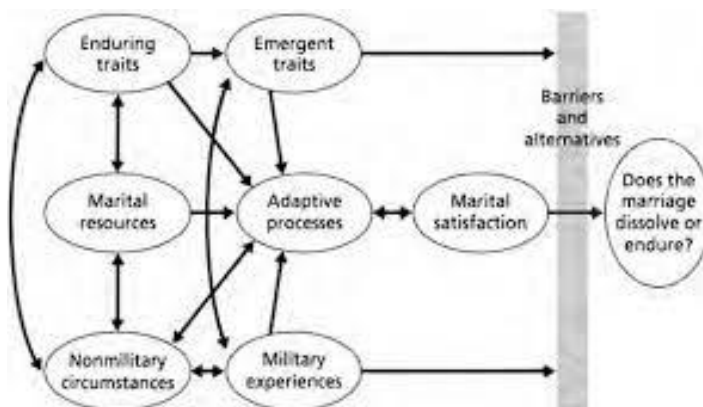
successfully handling past conflict, achieving promotions and awards). SF also works well when adapted to military culture by “using the client’s language, experiences, frame of reference, and seeks solutions that take the military context into account” (p. 398). The very nature of military service requires that members and families develop these strengths. In order to encourage resilience in face of intense challenges, Kuehl (1995) also suggests using a solution-oriented approach in helping families identify strengths and protective factors. The military’s cultural insistence on conformity around aforementioned core values makes a solution-focused model a natural fit for individual members and their families. A key feature of interaction among Marines is the insistence by leaders that subordinates not only bring problems, but also solutions, making SF an attractive model of counseling (Weiss, et al., 2010).

To summarize, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy was developed by Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer while working at the Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center in the early 1980s (Nichols, 2013). The basic philosophical approach of the SF method is pragmatic in nature and deceptively simple: 1. If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it. 2. If it works do more of it. 3. If it’s not working, do something different. 4. Small steps can lead to big changes. 5. The solution is not necessarily directly related to the problem. 6. The language for solution development is different from that needed to describe a problem. 7. Problems don’t happen all the time; there are exceptions. 8. The future is negotiable. The therapist takes a positive and collegial stance, looking for previous solutions to the problems through solution-oriented questioning. The therapist also avoids dwelling on the origins of the problem or interpreting motives. Instead, the therapist will give compliments and gently nudge the client toward doing more of what is working. SF interventions include goal-setting, the miracle question, scaling questions, and homework (de Shazer et al., 2007).

To further elaborate on the uniqueness of military culture, Moore (2012) underscores the reality that the military, regardless of branch, has complete authority over the service member (p. 16). The often quoted apocryphal saying, “If the Marine Corps wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one,” seems cruel, but hits close to home when the service member, who signed a contract, must leave for training or deployments at any time the service issues orders, leaving the dependent spouse to manage the household alone (p. 16). A consequence to this lifestyle is the growth of independence, a necessary and useful strength that can also be “disruptive for emotional closeness” (p. 16). Furthermore, some couples have adapted so well to frequent separations that prolonged reunions prove even more stressful. These couples find lengthy reunions so demanding that they look forward to future deployments (pp. 16-17). The willingness and ability of couples to adapt to the rhythms of military life will determine whether or not their marriage succeeds or fails.

Karney & Crown (2007) list a number of key elements for their model of success and failure in military marriages: enduring traits, emergent traits, relationship resources, military context, nonmilitary circumstances, adaptive processes, barriers and alternatives.

Figure 1. An Integrative Framework to Account for Success and Failure in Military Marriages.¹



1. Karney & Crown (2007), p. 28.

Each spouse brings to the marriage various enduring traits and characteristics. These include demographic variables (racial and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, religion, level of education), psychological variables (personality and psychopathology), and personal history (childhood, prior relationships). Spouses with positive enduring traits of strength and resilience (higher levels of education, positive childhood experience, absence of pathology) “tend to experience more favorable outcomes than spouses with many enduring sources of vulnerability” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. 19).

Over time emerging traits will develop as a consequence of military service. Emerging traits can be positive or negative. Positive emerging traits might include personal growth and maturity and financial responsibility which contribute to greater marital satisfaction. However, the pressure and relentless stress of military life over years can lead to negative emerging traits; substance abuse, infidelity, and maladaptive coping skills. “More dramatically, service members returning from battle may bring home lasting emotional and mental problems” such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, moral injury, and post-deployment adjustment stress (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. 22).

Relationship resources include all attributes the couple possesses that they may draw upon during times of stress. These resources encompass key factors such as the duration of the relationship, commitment level to the relationship (cohabitation, first marriage, or remarriage), the presence of children and step-children, as well as the quality of the relationship. Karney & Crown (2007) conclude that generally speaking, “people with greater resources (i.e., their relationships are more committed, longer lasting, more satisfying, and they have more biological children) should be better able to weather difficult times and still emerge with intact and high-functioning marriages” (p. 22).

Families within the military context must deal with long separations, frequent moves, and dangerous deployments. These frequent moves and extended separations place a unique strain on couples that civilian families do not face (Karney & Crown, 2007). Regardless of whether the couple is together or separated due to training or deployment, non-military circumstances such as maintaining a household, paying bills, helping children with homework, all must be successfully navigated. While the challenges among military couples are substantial, the military does offer sources of support that are not readily available to civilian families such as easy access to healthcare, community counseling, base housing, and a stable income (Karney & Crown, 2007).

Successful military marriages also depend on adaptive processes, which “refers to the ways spouses interact, communicate, resolve problems, provide support, and understand each other” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. 24). The rise of modern forms of communication enables separated families to remain in regular contact. Karney & Crown (2007) report that “norms for communication and conflict resolution may differ in the military context. Service members who grow accustomed to those norms may have difficulty transitioning to modes of interaction more appropriate for family life” (p. 24). These patterns suggest effective communication between spouses presents more challenges for military marriages than civilian marriages.

Lastly, Karney & Crown’s (2007) framework includes barriers and alternatives as a key to whether a military marriage might succeed or fail. Married military couples enjoy many benefits” free base housing or an allowance for off base housing, subsidized meals, health care, and access to many on base privileges. These benefits can function as barriers to divorce when couples are faced with the reality that they will no longer qualify for them once the marriage has dissolved. Forfeiture of these benefits can be an incentive for couples to work on their marriage rather than divorce. A frequently addressed issue in the military is marital infidelity, which

Karney & Crown (2007) refer to as “alternatives.” Long separations can cause partners to seek out alternative forms of companionship that they might not otherwise pursue if the spouse were present. How the couple safeguards these alternatives or finds effective ways to resolve past infidelity can determine future success of marriage.

Karney & Crown’s (2007) Integrative Framework is a useful model that features the many inherent and emerging strengths, support resources that are available to help married couples develop a more resilient relationship in light of military and non-military circumstances.

Hall (2008) lists Solution-Focused Brief Therapy as one of the most frequently used therapies for counselors working with military families.² The adaptive approach of the solution-focused method is particularly appealing in the military context. This is primarily due to the philosophical principle that the client is the expert, the therapist is not. As such, the therapist seeks to use “the client’s terms and phrases rather than the counselor’s” (p. 220). The counselor also helps the couple find solutions and recognize strengths that “work within the military context” (p. 220). The tribal nature and unique culture of the military require that any helping person have a deep understanding and empathy for the challenges that couples face. Weiss, et al. (2010) similarly place particular emphasis on the need for SF therapists to know and understand military culture and even suggest using a military-specific genogram to help provide culturally sensitive services and better able to assess protective and risk factors associated with military lifestyle (Weiss, et al., 2010, p. 397). In mapping out a family history through the genogram, the therapist gains a visual understanding of family history, key events, and an understanding of the service member’s perceptions, as well as finding strengths and resiliency factors of family members (Weiss, et al., 2010). Additionally, military couples often do not have time for long-

2. Military Life Family Counselors advertise Solution-Focused Therapy as their primary intervention. See <https://usmc-mccs.org/services/support/military-family-life-counselors/>.

term therapy. The limited and adaptive nature of SF can be of great use for couples who are off track.

Part of what makes SF attractive to the military is the emphases on strength and resilience, which are highly valued attributes among service members and veterans. This approach is particularly appealing to the “can-do” spirit prevalent across the armed forces (Moore, 2012). In addition, the “respectful, supportive, and nondirective/nonjudgmental tone of the therapist is also likely to be a welcome support to those with a military background” (Moore, 20012, p. 68). Given the stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and the pressure to endure, therapy might be seen as a statement of one’s incompetence. SF can be a disarming means of reducing the stigma when the service member and spouse instead find “a space of acceptance, respect, encouragement, and empowerment” (Moore, 20012, p. 68). Good therapists, whether they use SF or any therapeutic approach can and should help reduce the stigma and normalize the therapeutic process as much as possible.

Moore (2012) highlights the adaptability of SF that also makes it appealing to the military. While advanced training is required for professional therapists, there are elements of SF that can be utilized across the spectrum from commanding officers, chaplains, and leaders up and down the chain of command, especially as a mentoring tool to help subordinates and even colleagues discover strengths and build resilience. Moore (2012) notes potential weaknesses with SF among military couples, which might include overly emphasizing coping skills while failing to address underlying issues that might be focused on in longer therapy. Some couples may feel the need to revisit past hurts and experiences, whereas a SF therapist will want to guide the couple toward staying focused on the present situation “by hearing the solutions the couple has used in the past” (p. 70). Even still, the couple, through skills learned from SF, may learn to

focus on what they are “doing right to address the needs and issues rather than to focus on the distress that less-functional strategies cause” (p. 70).

Spirituality is an often overlooked, but powerful source of strength for military couples. Moore (2012) notes that over 72% of active duty members claim to be affiliated with some expression of Catholic or Protestant faith traditions (p. 12). All branches of the military, including the Coast Guard, employ chaplains to provide for the spiritual needs of service members and families. While chaplains will typically be cognizant of religious concerns, professional therapists may overlook the importance of faith and will need to be sensitive to how faith influences decision making (Moore, 2012). Couples who have a deep level of religious commitment may move toward forgiveness following betrayal as a means for healing (Moore, 2012). In addition to providing chaplains, the military also provides chapel facilities and a variety of retreat style programming for families, youth, and single service members.³

Since the ratification of the Constitution of the United States, the debate over public religion has centered on the First Amendment right that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The legal prohibition of religious favoritism by the government found in the establishment clause has been carefully guarded by the modern military. Yet, the free exercise clause requires that service member’s religious expression be accommodated, which is why the provision of a chaplain corps has been successfully defended before the Supreme Court (“Katcoff v. Marsh,” 1985). The Marine Corps encourages expressions of faith as a means of personal resiliency and overall fitness without giving bias to one faith tradition over another. This approach officially promoted from within the

3. One such program utilized by the Navy and Marine Corps is called CREDO (Chaplains Religious Education Development Operation). CREDO marriage retreats often utilize a variety of curriculum and resources, for example, PREP, John Gottman, Love Languages, and Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator.

modern Marine Corps and is broadly known as “spiritual fitness,” which incorporates personal faith, foundational values, and moral living (“Spiritual Fitness,” n.d.).

A resilience program developed by the Navy and Marine Corps called Combat Operational Stress Control, or COSC, is an assessment tool for unit leaders to monitor individual service members. COSC has “three main goals—prevention, identification, and treatment of “stress problems arising from military training and operations” (COSC, 2016, p. 1-2). The broader goal of COSC is resilience, which is defined as “the ability to withstand adversity without becoming significantly affected, as well as the ability to recover quickly and fully from whatever stress-induced distress or impairment has occurred” (p. 1-2). The program also promotes spirituality as a vital asset to managing combat and operational stress. Alongside physical and psychological fitness, “spiritual fitness” is also shown to add significantly to resilience (p. 3-31). While the program developers are careful not to formally recognize any particular religion, they do acknowledge and promote faith and spirituality as “valuable resources for resilience to stress and recovery from stress injuries” (p. 3-26). COSC encourages unit leaders to team with chaplains in supporting service members and families in exploring ways to strengthen their faith.

COSC (2016) appeals to the many studies that have “shown that a strong faith in God can add significantly to resilience, regardless of how that God is understood or worshipped” (p. 3-31). Consistent with the way religious rights have been supported and defended by the United States Federal government, that is to say, with a neutral public policy, COSC values the social and personal benefits of spirituality without defining it beyond broad concepts. What is primarily valued by the COSC program are the benefits of faith to the service member in promoting resilience. If particular faith-related activities are helpful and build resilience, then individuals

are encouraged to do more of those activities (p. 3-31), a principle also shared by proponents of SF. Strength is gained for the individuals and families from worshipping God as part of a local faith community. Broadly speaking, the COSC program defines spirituality as an “overarching source of meaning that transcends the day-to-day struggles of the individual and helps give life value and meaning” (p. 3-27).

Religious support as a means of strength for families can help build what Joseph (2011) terms “post-traumatic growth” (p. xvi). He identifies three main reasons why spirituality is helpful for individuals and families during times of stress: 1. Social support. 2. Sense of Meaning. 3. Ritual (pp. 124-125). Religious communities provide the necessary social support for members, which can be helpful when such support is needed during times of illness, family tension, or deployments. Religious doctrine and teachings can also provide a sense of meaning in the face of suffering. Lastly, rituals like memorial services and prayer are important in bringing closure and developing spiritual resilience.

In bringing an emphasis on resilience and spirituality together under a common cause, Kollar (2011) presents Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling as a “commonsense approach to counseling” that focuses on the positive strengths of clients rather than weakness (p. 19). Most pastors, chaplains, and religious professionals do not have the time to devote to becoming professionally licensed counselors. In addition, pastors are often too quick to refer clients. As an alternative, religious professionals can utilize the wisdom of God as a resource in helping clients discover their own God-given strengths through pastoral counseling with a focus on solution-building. This theory relies on the positive spiritual experiences of the client and makes the assumption that God is already active and at work in the lives of those who are stuck (pp. 19-20).

To conclude, research shows that while military families are faced with many focal points of stress, these families also have many strengths on which to rely, giving them the possibility for increased resiliency. Spirituality, in particular, is a powerful source of strength and resilience. In helping families discover these strengths, therapists can use solution-focused therapy. Solution-focused therapy is highly favored by mental health therapists assigned to the military and can also be adapted for use by chaplains seeking to integrate spirituality and solution-building techniques that promote resiliency in service members and their families. In the next chapter, a case study involving a military couple will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY

Mark and Julie came to my chapel office requesting help with their marriage.¹ Julie was visibly upset. Her eyes were red and puffy, and it was apparent that she had been crying. Her husband Mark, a Marine Gunnery Sergeant, had recently returned from a seven-month deployment. The couple are currently assigned to a unit on the island of Okinawa. While this most recent deployment was relatively routine and uneventful, Mark has had difficulty reuniting and reintegrating with his family. He is distant, uncharacteristically moody, and easily irritated around his wife and their three boys; ages nine, seven, and two. During our initial meeting he seemed resigned and somewhat ambivalent. Mark and Julie have been married since 2005.

Mark has deployed six times over the course of their marriage, four of which were in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Julie is frustrated with her marriage and with the Marine Corps. She feels bitter toward her husband for being gone so often and blames his frequent deployments for the current state of their marriage. The added strain of living overseas on Okinawa so far away from her immediate family and friends has elevated their current stress level. They are both committed Christians and have often relied on their faith to help them overcome past relationship issues, but have found it difficult to attend church together since Mark returned from his most recent deployment. Although he is a well-respected leader among his peers and within his unit, Mark has had difficulty functioning at work. He has been verbally counseled numerous times by his supervisor regarding his out of character angry outbursts toward his subordinates and disregard for direct orders from his command.

1. Names and identifying details have been changed.

Presenting Problem

Mark is having difficulty adjusting to post-deployment life at home with his wife and children, causing high levels of stress in his family. Julie is finding his mood swings and persistent avoidance of her and their children difficult to tolerate, resulting in arguments followed by long periods of stonewalling. In order to alleviate her feelings of isolation and homesickness in their present tour of duty, she has made regular attempts at participating in local events and engaging other families through church activities. The disappointing reunion, coupled with living so far away from her normal sources of support, has brought about feelings of disillusionment, describing the current state of her marriage as “unbearable.”

Identifying Information

Husband: Mark, male, born July 2, 1982. His self-reported racial and ethnic identity is Caucasian/white, American of European descent.

Wife: Julie, female, born April 20, 1983. Her self-reported racial and ethnic identity is Caucasian/white, American of European descent.

Assessments Administered to both Mark and Julie

1. Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI), Self-Scorable Form M.
2. Solution-Focused Marriage Assessment (Miracle Question, Hope-Scale).
3. Five Love Languages Questionnaire (Chapman, 2017).
4. Combat Operational Stress Continuum Model (COSC), a Green (Ready), Yellow (Reacting), Orange (Injured), Red (Ill).²

2. See Appendix A.

Relevant History

Mark grew up in Lansing, Michigan. His parents divorced when he was in middle school (age 13). Both parents are working professionals. His mother has a history of depression, which intensified after their divorce. He lived with his mother during the week and spent his weekends alternating between his mother's and father's houses. Mark reports that both parents were present and contributed positively to his upbringing. His father has a history of alcohol abuse, which contributed to their decision to divorce, but has maintained sobriety since Mark's high school years with the help of a local Alcoholics Anonymous group. Despite the distance due to his military service, he still maintains a positive relationship with his parents and visits them about once a year. His parents, when they were together, attended church occasionally, usually around Christmas and Easter. Mark was an honor roll student in high school but had no plans to attend college. While in school he was a member of the varsity football team and enjoyed the camaraderie that came with team sports. Mark was visited by a Marine Corps recruiter during his junior year and made the decision to enlist, leaving for bootcamp immediately after graduating in 2000. Despite the fast, operational tempo and continuous deployments of the post-9/11 military, Mark has reenlisted every four years and has made the Marine Corps a career. He has enjoyed regular promotions and is a well-respected leader among his subordinates and peers. He met Julie in Oceanside, California while stationed at Camp Pendleton.

Julie was born in San Clemente, California, the only daughter of a retired Marine father and a native Californian mother. Her parents have remained married. She describes her father as occasionally verbally abusive and has witnessed some physical abuse by her father toward her mother. These instances of verbal and physical abuse always involved alcohol. While she has ties with her father's family in his home of origin (Oklahoma), the distance has prevented any deep

connection. She has extended family through her mother's side in California. Julie describes her relationship with her maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins as close and supportive. Julie grew up in a charismatic church and has a deep personal commitment to her faith. She understands the biblical importance of redemption and forgiveness but has struggled coming to terms with what she describes as the hypocrisy of her father drinking to excess on Friday and Saturday nights, and at the altar every Sunday morning asking God for forgiveness.

Mark and Julie's Personal History

Mark met Julie while she was waiting tables at an IHOP restaurant in Carlsbad, CA. They quickly fell in love and married six months after meeting in 2005. Mark was deployed or away training for approximately thirty combined months of their first five years of marriage. Prior to their marriage and not long after joining the Marines, Mark experienced a dramatic religious conversion and became heavily involved in a local Baptist church in Oceanside, CA.

Julie believes her family's commitment to their faith prevented them from divorcing, despite the cycle of abuse. She was a good student throughout high school, but opted not to go to college, deciding instead to wait tables while still living at home. She grew up around the Marine Corps and her family was not surprised that she eventually married a Marine. Julie drifted away from church and faith related activities for a time, citing what she believed to be the hypocrisy of her home life. Julie recommitted to her faith after she began dating Mark. Both are resolved to raise their boys in church and pass along their faith. Despite the long deployment separations, she and the children have found a healthy routine through school, chapel, sports, and positive social connections in base housing. Their present tour of duty is in Okinawa, Japan.

Their first son, David (age nine), was born four years after they married. David is in fourth grade, plays football and baseball, maintains satisfactory grades, and teachers report no disciplinary problems. The middle son, Luke (age seven), is in second grade, shows little interest in sports but does enjoy the weekly piano lessons he began a few weeks ago and shows positive signs of academic potential. Their youngest son, Jonathon, recently turned two. He is strongly attached to Julie but is apprehensive of Mark. Although David and Luke often argue and engage in sibling rivalry, both are proud of their baby brother and are eager to help when their mother asks. Luke went through a period of jealousy after Jonathon was born but has since adjusted appropriately.

Mark reports being closer to David. This closeness is likely because they both enjoy sports. Luke has bonded more with Julie but is responsive to his father's attention. Both are respectful of their parents. Mark's long absences, while difficult for everyone, are a normal part of their lives. Julie has worked hard to maintain a routine and a sense of normalcy while Mark is deployed. She speaks positively of her husband in front of the boys and the importance of his job in keeping others safe, which has mitigated any potential disciplinary problems. David and Luke always look forward to reconnecting with their dad when he comes home, but this time around they have noticed that he is withdrawn, less interested in their activities, and irritable.

Developmental

Mark appears developmentally on target with nothing unusual or abnormal reported from childhood or adult years. Despite the divorce of his parents and a few difficult months of transition during middle school, Mark adjusted to the change and has maintained a good

relationship with both his mother and father. Mark's fitness level meets Marine Corps physical standards appropriate for his age.

Julie reports being close to her mother as a child and often fearful of her father. While he was never abusive toward her directly, her father was sometimes physically abusive toward her mother, which she witnessed, leaving her fearful of him. Child services came to their home on one occasion after Julie reported her father's abuse to her teacher. A family advocacy investigation reported inconclusive results. It was at this time that Julie's father sought help for his alcohol abuse through counseling and a "Celebrate Recovery" program. She and her mother have forgiven her father, but distance remains between them. Julie reports no medical conditions.

Social

Mark and Julie are well integrated into the community, which mainly revolves around their church family. They are also involved in base housing block parties and enjoy spending time with other couples. While Mark's desire to socialize has changed significantly since returning home, Julie still likes spending time with her friends, especially those who supported her while Mark was deployed. Both report normal childhood interactions with friends. Mark has a MBTI preference for extraversion, which is highly valued in the military, but has been much more withdrawn lately. Julie's preference for extraversion has made it easier for her to adapt to military culture where new duty station assignments have required her and her family to adjust to new neighborhoods, schools, and churches every few years.

Educational, Career

Mark is a high school graduate and has dedicated his entire adult life to the Marine Corps. He has found it rewarding and has enjoyed success. He has completed all required professional military education and leadership schools for each paygrade and is competitive for promotion to the next rank. He looks forward to retiring in a few years. Although he has taken a number of college courses through the Marine Corps tuition assistance program, he has no definitive plans to finish his bachelor's degree. Julie was a high school honors graduate. She worked at a number of low paying jobs early in their marriage but has mostly stayed home since their oldest son was born. She enjoys her role as a stay at home parent but does think about going back to school once the children are older.

Medical

No relevant medical history reported. Mark self-reports that his annual health assessments through Navy medicine declare him fit for duty.

Psychiatric

No prior psychiatric history reported. Their visit to my office was the first time either of them have sought therapy of any kind.

Appearance and Behavior

Julie appears stressed, exasperated, even despairing. There is desperation in her voice as she tearfully recounts the problems in her marriage. Mark is mostly quiet, looking down at his

feet, resigned, numb and appears not to care. Julie is dressed appropriately, wearing slacks and a printed blouse. Mark is in his camouflage utility work uniform.

Cognitive Functioning

Julie

Though Julie was visibly stressed and anxious, she was able to clearly communicate her thoughts and complaints about the current state of their marriage, which she feels is no longer working. Julie's reasoning was logical, rational, concrete. Perceptions were reality based. Judgment appeared sound. Conclusions regarding Mark's post-deployment changes as they related to her family life were substantiated and uncontested by Mark. She had no difficulty recalling from memory her family history or key milestones in her marriage, names, ages of her children, normal day to day activities and her home life in general. Capacity for learning appears normal.

Affect: Distressed, anxious, gloomy, despondent, near tears.

Mood: Feels sad, depressed, unhappy, frustrated, afraid.

Orientation: Julie is aware of the time, place, surroundings, people present. No suicidal or homicidal ideation, plans, present or history of attempts. She reports feeling helpless in her marriage, but not with regard to her life. She maintains hope in her faith and in their ability to overcome current relationship difficulties.

Mark

Mark's thinking was careful, guarded, but rational. Reasoning was sound. He was able to communicate clearly his thoughts into words. His perceptions were reality based. His judgment

was influenced by work related stress and slightly impaired, but otherwise sound. Mark was able to recall from memory key events from his family history, milestones in his personal history, career, marriage, children. Capacity for learning appears strong.

Affect: Downcast, appears numb, depressed, resigned.

Mood: Sad, lethargic, frustrated.

Orientation: Aware of time, place, people present.

Suicidal/Homicidal

Mark appears depressed and admits to having had brief and passing suicidal thoughts years ago but not currently. There is no family history of suicide, no plan to harm himself or others, no verbalized desire to die. Although obviously stuck, he reports no feelings of helplessness or hopelessness. When asked directly about thoughts of suicide, Mark listed numerous life-affirming protective guardrails; his faith, wife, children, church family, and the Marines who count on him. Despite Mark's multiple combat deployments, he self-disclosed that he has not been flagged by Navy Medicine's Post-Deployment-Health Assessment (PDHA), which screens for post-traumatic, combat and operational stress, changes in behavior, mood, thoughts. Julie is not suicidal and there are no indications that either of them are homicidal.

Assessment Results

Mark's MBTI preference, ESTJ is consistent with previous times he has taken the assessment and believes his reported type to be accurate. He is energized around people and is a mission-focused, practical, results-oriented, decisive leader. Most everything in his life is scheduled and planned, sometimes to a fault. Mark's "Love Language" results show that his

primary means of receiving and expressing love are acts of service, with physical touch as the secondary. Mark's stress level falls between the Yellow and Orange Zone on the COSC (see Appendix). Mark indicated he was at a 3 or 4 on the Solution-Focused Hope-Scale (1-10).

Julie's MBTI reported personality type is ENFP. Julie is warmly enthusiastic, spontaneous, and flexible – qualities which have served her well in supporting the ever-changing nature of her husband's career. Her primary love language is words of encouragement with quality time as the secondary. Julie believes her relationship is in the 3-4 range on the Hope-Scale. Julie's stress level also fell between the Yellow and Orange Zone on the COSC (see Appendix).

Validity of Results

Both Mark and Julie appear to have understood what was asked of them in each assessment and approached the tasks thoughtfully. Except where prohibited by time limits, both responded to all items in each instrument. Results are considered interpretable.

Case Formulation

Mark and Julie have had to live with a tremendous amount of military-related stress since the very beginning of their marriage. Military couples take for granted and normalize the fact that the active duty spouse will be frequently gone for extended periods of time. Couples like Mark and Julie who decide to make the military a career must adapt to the high operational tempo and periodic cross-country moves. While Mark and Julie both describe past reunions as joyous occasions, this most recent post-deployment transition period has been much less happy. Mark's difficulty in transitioning to life with his wife and children, as well as garrison life with

his unit, with the resulting moodiness and irritability, can be attributed to the rigors of the deployment cycle.

Mark's depressive symptoms including feelings of sadness, emptiness and diminished interest in many activities, including sex, have occurred on and off the past three months since he has been home. These symptoms, while concerning and having a significant negative effect on his marriage, seem to me to fall short of the criteria for a major depressive disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, this may change after further evaluation as Mark opens up more about his symptoms throughout the therapeutic process. The cause of Mark's depressive symptoms is possibly related to what Hart (2001) calls "post-adrenaline depression." Having endured a physically and emotionally demanding training cycle and deployment over the previous eighteen months and now experiencing a sudden change in pace has caused Mark's body to insist on time to recover. Hart (2001) explains,

When stress, even mild stress, is prolonged, the demand on the adrenal glands to produce the stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol taxes and even exhausts the system. While the demand for its services stays high, the adrenal glands seem to keep pushing themselves to produce their hormones like an overextended factory working overtime. But at the moment the demand drops, such as the end of a crisis or project, the system comes crashing down from exhaustion, depressing the whole body. (p. 47)

Julie's symptoms of distress seem to be in response to Mark's inconsistent behavior toward her and the children, and how his return home has caused a disruption in the family home rather than a joyful return and reunion like before. The resilience she has demonstrated in caring for her family while Mark was deployed along with the expectations of a joyous homecoming have been shattered by the disappointing let down of this post-deployment experience, causing her anger, frustration, and feelings of hopelessness with regard to her marriage.

Despite major differences in personality, as evidenced by their MBTI preferences, the couple both describe their relationship, under normal conditions, as complementary in how they interact and manage their family life together. Mark likes to plan and organize while Julie enjoys the spontaneity of getting in the car and just “seeing where the road leads,” which tends to be whatever destination Mark had already previously arranged. Mark expressed prior frustration with what he perceived as Julie’s tendency to procrastinate, but throughout their years together came to understand that Julie simply becomes more focused as deadlines approach. Other friction points that occurred along the way include Mark’s tendency to want to micromanage and dictate family decision-making as well as his lack of flexibility in disciplining their children. Julie’s management style of the household seemed chaotic to Mark, but is in reality more of a reflection of her willingness to be flexible toward the needs of their children as well as the ever-increasing demands of the Marine Corps. Both Mark and Julie agree that they’ve adapted well enough to each other’s personality and have learned to value their differences as the way God created them.

Recommendation

Fortunately for Mark and Julie, the foundation of their relationship is very strong. With a proven history of positively coping with the stresses of frequent deployments and military life in general, they have successfully employed strategies for not only surviving deployments, but also for thriving and flourishing during long separations. A major component for flourishing as a family has been their commitment to God and their local church. I recommend that Mark and Julie participate in 3-5 sessions of brief, solution-focused pastoral counseling that will help them to reemploy the strategies that worked in the past to strengthen their marriage. Although Mark

did not screen for major depressive disorder in the online Post-Deployment Health Assessment survey administered by the military, which he self-reported to me, I will be recommending that he make an appointment with the base mental health services for further individual care concurrent with the marital counseling they will receive from me.

Summary

Mark and Julie are an established military couple with a strong faith who have, up to this point, adjusted well to the demands of the Marine Corps. Mark reported no prior difficulties transitioning after deployments back to his role as husband and father. Previously, post-deployment transitional stress usually reduced over a few days or a couple of weeks as the couple adjusted back to life together. Mark has been home from his last deployment for three months. His inability to adjust to life at home has caused a great deal of distress for Julie, who for the first time in their marriage has threatened to leave with the children. Helping the couple to rediscover already existing strengths will be the key to successfully transitioning through their current relationship stress.

CHAPTER FIVE

THERAPY AND CONCLUSION

Initial Session

When Mark and Julie first walked into my office at the chapel I was assigned to while stationed on the island of Okinawa, they brought with them a desperation that was all too familiar. It was obvious that she had been crying for some time and Mark had a blank look on his face, numb to the pleas of his wife. “I just can’t take this anymore!” She cried. “He doesn’t even try. He comes home, plops himself on the couch in front of the TV while looking at his phone until dinner. He rarely speaks to me. When he does talk to me it’s to complain that the kids are being loud or that I’m nagging him.” Mark stood there quietly looking at the floor.

As Navy chaplains serving with United States Marines, we are encouraged to maintain an “open door” policy for our service members and their families. This gives those we serve immediate access to a helping resource they might not otherwise find with other agencies.¹ Like so many times before, I found myself ambushed by sudden emotional flooding. Feeling unprepared, I asked Mark and Julie to have a seat on the couch while I pulled over a chair. Not knowing where to begin, I started with what I knew best and asked them about their faith background, with both indicating belief in God and local church involvement. “Why did you come to me, a chaplain?” I asked, attempting to gain understanding. Julie immediately spoke up, “We don’t feel comfortable speaking with our pastor about our problems, but we know we need

1. The Community Counseling Center, for example, will do an immediate initial assessment then schedule sessions one to two weeks later depending on availability. Chaplains sometimes are thought of as psycho-spiritual first-responders, applying skillsets for immediate relief or networking and coordinating with other resources and making referrals as needed. Depending on the skillsets and competency of the chaplain, counseling may be offered, or referral given.

God's help. We haven't been to church since Mark came home a few months ago. It's a small island and everyone knows everyone. Also, your door was open, and you were here." After a brief moment, I asked if it would be ok if I opened with prayer, to which they both eagerly consented. This provided an immediate emotional de-escalation and sense of comfort that was not present when they first walked into my office. It also gave me time to collect my thoughts and draw strength from the Holy Spirit. Julie appeared slightly more relaxed. Mark also seemed more engaged when I offered to pray. The three of us bowed our heads and asked for God's help and guidance.²

Prayer is a vital asset in pastoral counseling. Invoking the presence of God and asking for divine intervention for not only the couple but the direction given by the pastoral counselor acknowledges our absolute dependency on God and His sovereign will. In addition, opening the session in prayer is also a reminder that "with God all things are possible," and that He is the great physician, healer of our souls, including our marriages (Matthew 9:9-13, 19:26). After prayer, I engaged the couple:

Chaplain: Julie, I can see that you are upset. Can you tell me a little more about why you are unhappy with your marriage?

Julie: I just want things to be like they were before. I can't take it. I feel like I'm alone. Even when he's home it's like he's not home. He's a ghost.

Chaplain: What was your relationship with Mark like before, when you felt happy, when things were going right?

2. Worthington (1989) says that "counseling should be grounded in prayer and in the explicit identification of Jesus as the healer of individuals and the restorer of relationships" (p. 24). Kollar (2011) also notes that "prayer drastically interrupts the negative interactional cycle" (p. 155).

Julie: We talked. We did things together. He was involved in our children's lives. But today it's like he's not here anymore.

Chaplain: Mark, tell me about how you feel things are going with Julie.

Mark: I haven't felt the same since coming home from my last deployment. I'm struggling to connect with Julie and the kids and I don't know why.

Chaplain: What are your best hopes for coming to see me?³

Julie: I want my marriage to work. I hope that we can communicate better, spend time together. I need him to acknowledge me and pay attention to me.

Mark: I hope to make my wife happier and be more involved with my kids. I hope to feel more connected. I'm really struggling right now.

The Solution-Focused approach is hope-centered and future oriented. "Best hopes" questions are forward-looking, open-ended, full of possibilities (Connie, 2013). Another way of asking about best hopes might be, "How would you like tomorrow to be different from today?" I did not expect Mark to answer, but surprisingly he recognized that he is not putting forth the effort in building his relationship with Julie and his kids since he's returned from deployment. The hope question helps establish the relational destination, where the couple would like to be. Arriving there requires that the couple regain their bearings, their present location. Jones' (2006) reference to God's initial intervention of *locale* by asking Adam and Eve in the garden "where are you?" is helpful here. Mark and Julie needed to know their present location in order to find their way home. They were off track in relationship to themselves, others, and God.

Chaplain: I'm going to ask you a strange question. Suppose that one night while you

3. Connie (2013) calls this "establishing the destination."

were asleep, there was a miracle and this problem was solved. How would you know?

What would be different? How would the two of you know without saying a word?⁴

Julie: I wouldn't feel alone. He would help me with the kids. We would do things together, talk more. We would be friends again. We would go to church together as a family again and serve God.

Mark: She would give me my space. I know I have work to do, but I need her to stop getting on me so much.

Chaplain: What would be different, Mark, if you woke up tomorrow and the problem was gone, and your marriage was functioning as it should?

Mark: We would get up early and eat breakfast together like we used to. She would come see me during the day. Maybe get a babysitter and go on a date once in a while. I used to coach my sons in little league and teach Sunday school. Maybe I would be doing those things once again. Julie would hug me more. We would have sex more often.

Julie: I want those things too, but I've been taking care of the kids all by myself and I need you to help me! I thought you would help me like you used to! I am exhausted! I cannot give any more than I've given! You are not the same since you returned from this last deployment.

It was important here to keep Mark and Julie focused on future possibilities and thinking about what their marriage would be like if the problems were not present. Julie was angry and frustrated, wanting to unload on Mark. However, revisiting past hurts can distract the couple from working toward a hopeful future and possibly even reinforce the problems (Kollar, 2011).

4. Adapted from de Shazer (1988).

Instead of reexamining the reasons why they are unhappy, I introduced Mark and Julie to the “Hope-Scale” (Connie, 2013; de Shazer, 1988).

Chaplain: Thank you for your honesty. I know this season in your marriage is a challenging one and both of you are frustrated with the way things are going. Earlier when I asked the miracle question, I sensed hope in both of you that it was possible to regain the joy you once had in being together.

Julie: Yes. We were strong once and it felt like nothing could stop us. I thought we were a power couple.

Mark: I love Julie and I want her to be happy like she was before.

Chaplain: There is a strong foundation in your marriage that is already present. And of course, your faith in Jesus needs to be part of that strength as well. Remember Paul’s words in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.” Do you believe those words?

Mark: Yes, but I’m struggling right now.

Julie: I know God is present and that He wants us to succeed.

Chaplain: Let’s use what some call the “Hope-Scale” to help us think about a better possibility. On a scale of zero to ten, zero being the worst possibility and ten being the best, where do you feel like you are in your marriage?

Julie: Before coming in I would have said zero, but after hearing Mark for the first time in months talk about our relationship, I feel like maybe I’m at a three or a four.

Mark: Maybe a three or four too, I suppose. I’m not sure.

Chaplain: I’m glad there is agreement in where you feel like your marriage is on the Hope-Scale. That means you both know where you are! You’re not lost, you know

exactly where you are, and you have your bearings. That means we can know the way forward. This is good! There is hope. Imagine for a moment that the two of you come back here in a week or two and report that you've moved up on the Hope-Scale to maybe "a four or five," what are some things that would have occurred that each of you would tell me that progress has been made?

Julie: We would go to church together as a family this Sunday. Mark would talk to me and help with the children. He would find someone to talk to to help deal with whatever it is he won't talk to me about.

Mark: We would go out together, alone, on a date. Even if it's just a couple hours.

Chaplain: What's preventing you from doing those things?

Mark: I don't know. I'm just in a funk. I'm burned out from work, exhausted.⁵ Usually I bounce right back after a deployment, but it feels different this time.

Chaplain: Maybe the two of you getting away this Friday might help you reconnect? Or doing something simple like going to church this Sunday might help you normalize your transition time as a family?

The added benefit of using the Hope-Scale was in helping Mark and Julie realize that even though they were struggling with their marriage, they were identifying strengths already present and given enough open discussion, there was hope for improvement they both recognized. The Hope-Scale gave Mark and Julie a reference point to where they presently were as a couple.

5. Mark's extensive deployment history and current post-deployment behavior toward his family is consistent with Hodge's (2010) observation that "the desire to shut down, detach, and withdraw can be very strong after combat. Warriors often want to be left alone. This can mean not doing a lot of the things that the warrior used to enjoy doing and can be extremely frustrating for loved ones and friends" (pg. 32).

While getting to ten is certainly ideal, it's not realistic. However, only a small change is needed to increase their marital satisfaction (Bannink, 2010). Mark and Julie only need to do those things that might move them to a "four or five" on the scale. Together they were already able to name a few "exceptions" to the problem: talk more, go to church together, go on a date. These exceptions can help them experience just small changes in their current status, minor course corrections to get them pointed in the right direction. One of the foundational principles of SF is that individuals and couples "usually already carry the rudiments of solutions within themselves. These are the exceptions to the problem" (Bannink, 2010). Because Mark and Julie are the "experts" of their marriage, they already know what changes will help them move in a positive direction (Bannink, 2010). Small corrective course changes are encouraged and even celebrated. Enough small steps can lead to big changes (de Shazer, 2007).

Three practical components are at work within this simple Hope-Scale: 1. Assessment 2. Evaluation, and 3. Intervention (Franklin, 2012, p. 28). The Hope-Scale works as an ongoing assessment throughout the therapeutic process to measure progress from session to session. If the couple goes up on the Hope-Scale, compliments are given and time is spent discussing how they were able to move in a positive direction, highlighting inherent strengths and offering encouraging support for continued progress. As an evaluation tool, the Hope-Scale "makes it clear that the client's evaluation is more important than the therapist's" (Franklin, p. 28). In SF, it's the client, whether an individual or couple, that is respected as the expert. Franklin (2012) notes that

the therapist assumes a 'not-knowing' position, which means being curious and making efforts to understand the client's frame of reference without prejudice about the problem, its origins, and possible solutions. The therapist's not knowing position lets the client take the 'expert' position...while the therapist is responsible for the process of keeping the conversation focused on solutions, the client is responsible for the content of the conversation. (p. 301)

Lastly, the Hope-Scale functions as an intervention tool. Because of the focus on previous solutions and exceptions, it places the emphases on new changes as they occur (Franklin, 2012). If the scale moves up, the therapist can encourage the couple to continue doing the things that are working. If it's not moving up but remaining the same, the therapist can offer support by asking how they were able to maintain the same place on the scale without it going down, even complimenting them for not making it worse (Franklin, 2012).

Session Two

Mark and Julie returned to my office a couple weeks later. Both appeared in much better spirits. Julie seemed happier and Mark was much more engaging, even making eye contact and shaking my hand with a firm handshake.

Chaplain: It's great to see the two of you! I'm glad you were able to make it today.

What has been better since our first meeting?⁶

Julie: We went to church together last Sunday! It was refreshing to worship together after so many weeks of not going.

Chaplain: Fantastic! Mark, how was that for you?

Mark: It made me feel like I was part of the family again. Like I was being a good example for my kids.

Chaplain: I want to commend both of you for taking such a large step toward making your relationship work. I know it wasn't easy for you to step out in faith. But you did it!

6. Asking "what has been better?" as opposed to asking, "how have things been?" or "how are you doing?" communicates an assumption of progress, allowing solution-building from the first session to continue. It also "moves the couple away from problem language that might counteract the progress made to that point" (Connie, 2013, p. 85).

Mark: I was worried that people would judge us...judge me for being away for so long. First Church, Okinawa really supported me. They prayed for me before I left, even sent a couple of care packages and took good care of Julie and the boys while I was gone. I thought it would be hard to face Pastor John, after avoiding him since I came home, but everyone was so nice to us and welcoming. It felt good to be back in church, worshipping God and hearing the Word preached.

Chaplain: It's amazing how such a simple act, like going to church together as a family can improve your feelings toward one another.

Julie: It did feel good to reconnect with our friends.

Chaplain: So, the last time we met, both of you indicated you were at a three or a four on the Hope-Scale. Where are you today? Have things improved since last time?

Julie: It's hard to say. He's still not talking much. And he rarely eats dinner with the family.

Chaplain: How many times did he eat dinner with you last week?

Julie: I think twice.

Mark: I ate with the family three times. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. I had to work late Wednesday and I wasn't feeling well Friday or Saturday.

Chaplain: How often did you eat together before we started meeting?

Julie: Maybe once a week, if that.

Chaplain: If I remember correctly, during our last session, you (Julie) couldn't stop crying, and your voice was elevated. And Mark, you barely spoke or made eye contact. Today, you (Julie) are composed, calm, and clear-minded. Mark, I noticed you shook my hand and looked me in the eye. Additionally, you went from eating together once a week

to three times last week AND you went to church together. These are all positive changes from where you were since our last meeting.

While Mark and Julie had difficulty saying with confidence that they moved up on the Hope-Scale, it was important for me to point out that there had been clear signs of progress (Connie, 2013, p. 87). They may not presently feel like they are where they should be in their relationship and might even be harboring resentment and pain from unresolved conflict. However, it was apparent that things had improved, and this needed to be highlighted to the couple. Mark was coming to dinner more frequently, they went to church, and both of them appeared to be in a better mood during the second session. Perfection isn't the goal, only small positive steps in the right direction. Both agreed that church attendance was a positive experience for them as a couple and indicated they would continue to attend as a family at least once a week. Instead of seeing forward progress in Mark joining the family for dinner two or three times during the week, Julie was quick to point out the times he missed the family meal. My role was to reframe the previous week as a positive—Mark went from rarely eating with the family to joining them a few times during the week. Once this was pointed out to them, both agreed that they had made some progress.

During our initial session, Mark indicated that he would like to go out alone on a date with his wife, which turned out to be a sore subject. Trusted babysitters are hard to find among service member families on Okinawa. I suspected that Julie was overly reluctant to let others, no matter how trustworthy, watch her children and did not put much effort in finding childcare. We did not spend much time on why they did not go on a date so as to not highlight failures, but instead focused on what was working in the previous two weeks.

As a possible intervention Mark and Julie could utilize in between sessions, I suggested they make it a goal to pray together as a couple at least twice a week.⁷ Praying with and for each other daily would be optimal, but I wanted to set the bar low enough that it could easily be maintained and it would give them another strength they could rely on and celebrate. Because both expressed a strong commitment to their Christian faith, I felt free to share with them the importance of praying together as a couple, not only for purposes of divine intervention, but also for their own spiritual formation (Mulholland, 2016). Paul's instructions on prayer encouraged the church at Philippi to

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:3-7)

As a brief teaching moment, I shared with Mark and Julie that the Apostle Paul's insights here show something of a template for prayer and a model for relating to God. Our faith is strengthened when we rejoice in the Lord and give thanks for his many blessings. When we are mindful of His active presence, we are empowered to put away our anxieties by making our request known to God (Mulholland, 2016).

It is through this continuous, active, moment by moment relationship with our Heavenly Father that he promises to give us "peace (*shalom*) that transcends all understanding." Mulholland (2016) comments that God's *shalom* is not the absence of struggle or conflict, but the orderliness of life experienced before God, "in which true wholeness and fulfillment are experienced" (p. 127). He cautions that *shalom* "is not an escapist kind of peace; it exists in the midst of relationships that threaten to undo us. Thus it 'passes all understanding'" (p. 127). It

7. Worthington (2014) suggests prayer as an effective intervention for hope and a future, commenting that "couples who prayed together had increased trust after four weeks of praying for and with each other" (p. 51).

was important for Mark and Julie to know that the presence of God in their marriage was their ultimate source of strength. Of course, this did not mean that their relationship would be absent of conflict, but that they would learn to find peace and order even as they work to “solve their solvable problems” (Gottman, 1999). As a homework assignment, I gave Mark and Julie a copy of the *Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman (2017) for them to read together. Mark and Julie recalled that I had administered the “Love Languages” test when we first met, so they both were excited to read the resource together to learn more about speaking each other’s love language.

Moral Injury

Knowing Mark’s deployment history and his service with units that saw intense combat early on during Operation Iraqi Freedom had me concerned about his ability to process his experiences and transition home. While his most recent deployment was routine and did not involve combat operations, I knew that his previous combat-related experiences may be contributing in some way to his current struggles. Mark self-disclosed that his Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) survey did not raise any concerns with his medical provider and that he was declared fully fit for duty. The PDHA, which is online, is completely dependent upon the service member honestly answering the questions. Out of fear of stigma, appearing weak, or a simple desire to get the survey over with, many Marines will quickly click the right answer they know will not draw further attention. If they indicate that they are having difficulty processing events from the previous deployment, they will be required to address those issues with a medical provider, usually a Naval Medical Officer who is assigned to the Marine’s unit.

The Marine culture, and broader military as a whole, values the strong, stoic, mission-focused “suck it up” ethos. This resilience-building training begins the day a new recruit shows

up to boot-camp, and continues throughout their career (Wood, 2016). Throughout this intense training and beyond, Marines are indoctrinated in love of Corps and Country, taught the values of personal character and virtue, and are constantly reminded of their core values of honor, courage, and commitment (Wood, 2016). Despite best efforts at reducing the stigma for those seeking mental health support, there is strong pressure for Marines to “suck it up” and continue as if nothing were wrong. Mark, a career Marine, fully immersed within this culture was no exception. His withdrawal from his wife and children may be his way of coping with experiences from previous deployments, which is why I encouraged him to seek individual care from the community counseling center or other mental health resources.

My commitment to focus on the “couple as the client” was upended when Mark came to my office after session two, but without Julie. He confirmed that he had been seeing a counselor alone weekly but felt the need to share with me a few things that he had been dealing with that he did not feel comfortable sharing with Julie. His earlier combat deployment experiences were truly life or death. He participated in the initial invasion of Iraq (2003) and subsequent phases, losing numerous friends along the way.⁸ He believed strongly that his involvement in the conflict met the requirements of a “Just War” and that God was with America.⁹ Years later, during this most recent deployment, where they “did nothing but train and sail from port to port for months on end,” he felt what can only be described as an existential crisis where he questioned not only the politics of war and America’s involvement, but also the morality of war altogether.

8. Operation Iraq Freedom (2003-2011) consisted of seven phases: Liberation of Iraq, Transition of Iraq, Iraqi Governance, National Resolution, Iraqi Surge, Iraqi Sovereignty, Operation New Dawn. “Campaign Phases.” Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_Campaign_Medal.

9. Charles and Demy (2010) broadly define just war as including the following principles: 1. Sufficiency of cause. 2. Justifying intervention. 3. Rationale of a greater good. 4. Right intention. 5. Proportionality of use of force. 6. Legitimate authority.

Mark further described the frustration of leading young Marines who “constantly complained about missing their girlfriends, the horrible chow, and lack of internet access while underway.” He went on, further describing his anger: “I’m listening to these whiners who’ve never gotten shot at or had to apply a tourniquet and watch their friend bleed out anyway. This new generation has no honor or respect for authority. All they care about is Facebook and Instagram.” Mark’s frustration with his Marines and his angry reactions toward them led to formal counseling from his chain of command and numerous cautions to modify his leadership style.¹⁰

What Mark was processing is consistent with what David Wood (2016) calls “moral injury,” which he describes as being

real as a flesh wound. In its most simple and profound sense, moral injury is a jagged disconnect from our understanding of who we are and what we and others ought to do and ought not to do. Experiences that are common in war—inflicting purposeful violence, witnessing the sudden violent maiming of a loved buddy, the suffering of civilians—challenge and often shatter our understanding of the world as a good place where good things should happen to us, the foundational beliefs we learn as infants. The broader loss of trust, loss of faith, loss of innocence, can have enduring psychological, spiritual, social, and behavioral impact. (p. 8)

Unclear definitions of victory, the prolonged nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the inconsistencies in American foreign policy throughout the decades have also contributed to the uneasiness that some experience in processing the return home.

At eighteen years of service, Mark had spent virtually his entire career fighting the same wars. Now at the end, he was filled with introspection, wondering if it was worth the blood and treasure.

Mark: After we were attacked on 9/11, I never questioned our right to go into

10. Formal counseling in this context is a disciplinary tool that can include verbal cautions and written reprimands that are included in the service member’s permanent record.

Afghanistan or Iraq, until now. I had a lot of time to think on this last deployment.

Chaplain: And what came of your thinking?

Mark: Confusion. Sometimes ambivalence. Anger, resignation. I don't know.

Chaplain: What has changed over the years that makes you question our involvement?

Mark: I just don't know what good any of it has done. I don't know what makes us any better than them. I was so confident years ago. And now I just don't know anymore.

I've made my living serving my country. Things we did over there, things that I did.

Some of those things I can't get out of my head.

Chaplain: What things?

Mark: We had Rules of Engagement, and I believe I followed them the best I could.¹¹

Either way, the men I killed were shooting at us too. I had to return fire. I didn't break any laws. But in reality, they were just defending their homes. I keep thinking that because of me, someone lost a dad, husband, a son, a brother, a friend. No one ever questioned my actions. But I still feel ashamed. I have for years.

Chaplain: What has kept you going all this time? What gives you strength?

Mark: Sometimes it's my faith. Sometimes it was just coming home to my family.

Almost always it was my faithfulness to the Marines to my left and right. I guess I never really dealt with how I felt before now. I just sucked it up like everyone else. I thought

I'd be a better husband and father by now. I'm failing my Marines at work. I get

frustrated with them and I yell and belittle them. I worry that God will judge me.

Chaplain: Not only is this affecting you at work, but your family is suffering as well.

11. Rules of Engagement are defined as "those directives issued by competent military authority that delineate the circumstances and limitations under which United States forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered" (USMC, "Law of War," p. 2).

Mark: I just feel numb. It's easier to avoid my wife and children. I wish my confidence in God was as strong as it used to be.

Moral injuries can occur anytime a person is exposed to an event that challenges their strongly held beliefs in right and wrong. War in particular is an alternate moral universe where ethics and morals are revoked, and the Golden Rule reversed. Because of this, Wood (2010) says that any war experience can expose a person to moral injury. Most return from combat deployments with "some sense of unease about what we've seen and done, about how well we and others have lived up to our own standards" (p. 9).

Common reactions to moral injury include cynicism, bitterness, distrust of authority, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and isolation (Wood, 2010). Mark's current struggle with depression and desire to isolate himself are consistent reactions to moral injury. The change that takes place from these new experiences is difficult to process. The military is very good at training disciplined and efficient warriors, but the aftermath, no matter how just the war, can leave many combatants psychologically and spiritually unprepared (Wood, 2016).

Instead of avoidance and isolation, perhaps what Mark needed was a time of spiritually guided solitude. While most Evangelicals are familiar with daily devotionals or quiet times, the ancient discipline of solitude is relatively unfamiliar. And yet, solitude is a key discipline for those who seek after God (Willard, 1988). This is much more than ten or fifteen minutes of Bible reading and a prayer. Solitude is getting away to a quiet place void of all distractions and responsibilities. Henri Nouwen (2000), in his book "Out of Solitude," poignantly addresses how vital this discipline is:

I want to reflect on this lonely place in our lives. Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our lives are in danger. Somewhere we know that without silence words lose their meaning, that without listening speaking no longer heals, that without distance closeness cannot cure. Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our actions

quickly become empty gestures...solitude and community form the basis of the Christian life and should therefore be the subject of our most personal attention. (pp. 14-15)

Perhaps the tendency to engage in avoidance and isolation is really a soul-cry for the presence of God? “Avoidance-oriented-coping” is a common post-trauma reaction that generally produces poor resilience (Joseph, 2011, p. 119).

Mark was delaying his own reintegration into his unit and his reunion with his family by utilizing avoidance-coping rather than drawing strength from his faith so he could face his challenges. The spiritual discipline of solitude, however, is not avoidance. Solitude reinvigorates one spiritually, strengthening one for daily trials. Solitude is one of many tactics that could help Mark heal from his moral injuries and existential angst after years of combat deployments. Now that he was in the twilight of his Marine Corps career, he needed to learn new strategies of reframing his earlier experiences in light of his faith and growth as a human, as well as seeing his future as one filled with hope and new possibilities. Of course, Mark will need more guidance along the way, one that will include further spiritual direction and most likely ongoing individual therapy.

Mark’s senior leadership role within his unit as well as his role as a husband and father needed to be refocused in light of his faith and relationship with God (Barton, 2008). I challenged Mark to spend an hour a couple days a week in solitude with no phone or other electronics. During his quiet hour, he was to avoid any attempt at productivity. Instead he was instructed simply to sit before the Lord in silence, listening for His voice, reflecting on God’s grace and mercy, emptying himself of human loyalties, setting aside his ego and need to accomplish something (Barton, 2008). To aid his spiritual formation and help him process his struggles, I gave him a list of Scripture references on solitude upon which to meditate (Habakkuk

2:20, Isaiah 30:15, Psalm 23:1-3, 39:2-5, 46:10, 62:5, Lamentations 3:28, Exodus 33:7, 11, I Kings 19:9, 12, Mark 1:35, 6:31-32, Luke 5:16).

Dallas Willard (1988) calls solitude “the most radical of disciplines for life in the spirit” (p. 101). Solitary confinement in prison systems is one of the worst possible punishments and is used to break the human will to conformity. Humans are social creatures in regular need of interaction with other humans. As much as we might want to avoid being alone, solitude as a spiritual discipline has the intended outcome of breaking our sinful will, molding it into conformity with the will of Christ (Romans 12:1-3), not as a means of punishment as in the penal system, but as means of opening the gateway for the overflowing joyful blessings of God in our daily lives. As a spiritual discipline, solitude nurtures the soul, drawing deep from the wellspring of God’s grace and mercy. It is a powerful source of strength that provides rest and healing from traumatic memories. Even as anxiety, depression, personal and professional frustration take place, taking time to remind oneself that the Lord is my Shepherd and walking with Him through the valley of the shadow of death will provide sufficient grace to carry on along that narrow path (Psalm 23:1-6, Matthew 7:13-14, II Corinthians 12:9).

Mark’s commitment to spending an hour a couple times a week in solitude had the added benefit of giving him a spiritual ritual to help cleanse his soul, make peace with his experiences, and continue developing spiritual resilience. The Marine Corps’ own publications acknowledge the correlation between a strong faith in God and resilience (COSC, 3-31). The publication gives straightforward guidance for chaplains and unit leaders simply to “encourage religious practice.” In a diverse institution like the military, this is left to the individual to pursue. However, in facilitating spiritual resilience, “unit leaders can make such resources available to unit members by creating a culture of respect for religious practice and tolerance for religious diversity and by

setting aside time in weekly schedules for religious worship” (COSC, 3-31). This pragmatic approach by the Marine Corps gives broad approval for unit leaders to support their personnel when opportunities to attend weekday services arise, such as daily Mass for Catholics or seasonal high holy days that occur during Holy Week or Ramadan.

To further aid Mark’s journey to spiritual and psychological wholeness and recovery, I asked him to read through I and II Samuel in order to learn from the life of David. Many service members resonate with David as both a man of deep abiding faith and a professional man of war. Although David gave glory to God and credited him for his abilities as a warrior (Psalm 144:1-2), he was also not immune from the psycho-spiritual fallout of bloodshed. The Bible neither glorifies war nor ignores the reality of violent conflict between nations. Warfare is one of the many consequences of our fallen world. Many men and women, including David have suffered the consequences of less than honorable behavior while engaged in conflict (Wood, 2016). While David’s sins were recorded for history, Mark’s struggle with moral injury was not because he committed murder or violated the legalities of the Rules of Engagement, it was simply due to the heavy psychological burden of taking life. As a continued means of healing, I also assigned to him Psalm 51, which outlines a pattern of confession and spiritual renewal, to read and meditate upon during his daily times of solitude.

Session Three

Two weeks had passed when Mark and Julie came for a third session. Both appeared more upbeat and positive.

Chaplain: Thanks for coming today. I’m really glad to see you. Both of you look much happier than after our initial meetings. What has been better since we last met?

Julie: I really enjoyed the Love Languages book. It was an easy read and much of it made sense to me.

Chaplain: That's great! So, both of you were able to complete the homework from last session with no problem?

Mark: The reading was fine. I'm not sure love and relationships are as easy to fix as Chapman thinks they are.

Chaplain: I can see why you would think that. I just think it's wonderful that the two of you took the time and effort to read the book together. That must have taken a great deal of effort. How were you able to do that?

Mark: We started immediately after our last session, sitting down at the kitchen table, taking turns reading to each other. I could see that she enjoyed reading together and it made me want to keep going.

Julie: Even though I knew Mark didn't get as much out of the book as I did, it felt good to me that he was taking the time and energy to at least try. I felt valued.

Chaplain: So, Mark, you were speaking Julie's love language of quality time and filling her "love tank" by just reading the book with her.

Mark: Yeah. I suppose I was!

Chaplain: Are you surprised to see how much spending time with Julie and reading together meant to her?

Mark: Yes. After we read the book together, we sat on the couch, cuddled, talked some more, like we used to do. Things felt normal. For once I felt like I was part of the family again.

Chaplain: So, if I understand correctly, that simple act of reading a book together not only filled Julie's need for quality time, but led to an enjoyable time afterward where you continued talking, even cuddling, meeting your need for physical touch?

Mark: Yes. It was very enjoyable. We even made love afterwards.

Chaplain: By meeting Julie's need for quality time, she responded by meeting your need for physical touch. It looks to me like you two have found a key strength in helping you get back on track, learning to speak each other's love language.

Even though Mark expressed skepticism over the contents of the book, he inadvertently fulfilled Julie's need for quality time by simply taking the time and effort to read the book with her. The activity did not require anything more than minimal effort on the part of the couple, but the reward for "turning toward each other instead of away" paid dividends in "nurturing fondness and admiration" for each other (Gottman, 2015).

Chaplain: What else has been better in your relationship?

Julie: We've tried praying together and reading Scripture but it didn't go so well.

Chaplain: Why not?

Julie: I didn't feel like he was taking it seriously, just going through the motions.

Mark: It's awkward. I've always had a hard time praying out loud and it's even harder with just Julie.

Chaplain: But you both gave it an honest effort. You tried to pray together as a couple. That has to count for something.

Julie: I know he's trying to work on his own prayer life and make peace with God. I just wish he would talk to me more about why he's having such a hard time.

Mark: It's hard to talk about it.

Julie: The children and I worked really hard to make it work while he was gone. I just don't understand why he is so distant all the time.

Chaplain: In the weeks since he returned, Mark has tried to be less distant, right?

Julie: Oh yes. He has tried and I recognize his effort. We've been doing more as a family, he eats with us almost every night now. I know he has met with you alone and is working on his faith to help him work through his struggles.¹² He's even helping with the kids more.

Chaplain: Even though you prefer he speak to you about his troubles, you acknowledge that Mark has other outlets to help him cope with his previous deployment experiences, which I see that is a wonderful sign of progress and maturity. Given all the progress that the two of you have made over our time together, communicating more, sharing moments of intimacy, encouraging each other in your faith, where do you now see yourselves on the Hope-Scale? Previous sessions you both indicated you were at a three or four out of ten. Where are you now?

Mark: I would say we are at a five.

Julie: Maybe a little higher. Like six. I don't feel as desperate as I did before.

Conclusion of Therapy

After three sessions, Mark and Julie decided they no longer needed counseling. Gurman (2008) states that "therapy stops when the clients are satisfied that their goals have been adequately met" (p. 277). Consistent with the philosophy of Brief Therapy, from which SF grew,

12. My approach is to focus on the marriage as the client and avoid forming alliances with either individual. Mark felt comfortable with me speaking alone allowing me to minister to him individually. I felt guiding him in his spiritual direction could help his marriage, so I willingly met with Mark alone, but was careful not to bring our individual discussions into the couple's discussion unless it was brought up by them.

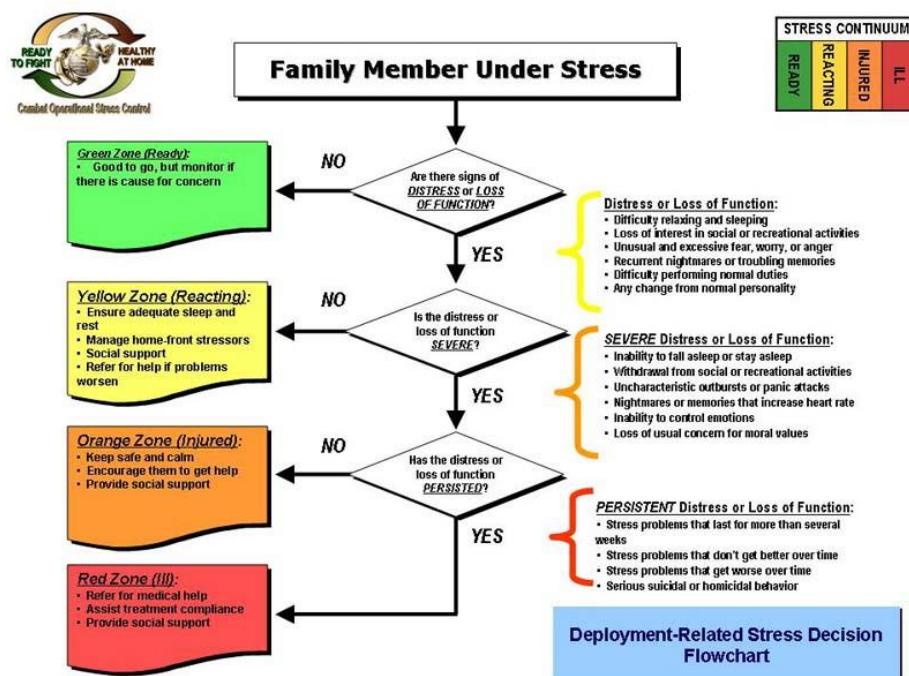
this minimalistic approach seeks to end therapy as quickly as possible, giving the couple just enough tools to help themselves get unstuck and back on track (Gurman, 2008). Throughout the three sessions, the couple discovered strengths that were already present. As their chaplain (therapist), my role was to position myself as a consultant, asking purposeful questions designed to empower them to find what works and what doesn't work (Gurman, 2008). Mark and Julie seemed to respond well to this approach, each reporting positive improvements in their relationship throughout the therapeutic process. Sometimes couples expect to spend time working through underlying issues and past grievances. Mark and Julie responded well to the solution-focused approach of focusing on future possibilities, competencies and strengths, rather than dysfunctions. Being a chaplain and not their local church pastor gave me a better position to listen objectively to the couple and address their marital stress and spiritual concerns.

While most solution-focused methods incorporate a break at some point during the initial session, I chose not to do this with Mark and Julie. Taking a break seemed too disruptive to the session. Gurman (2008) acknowledges that many therapists do not take a formal break, but that "classic solution-focused therapy is characterized by the therapist taking a short break" about half-way through the session (p. 270). Originally, the purpose of taking a short break was to consult with other therapists, who would observe the therapy session behind a two-way mirror. According to Franklin, Trepper, Gingerich, and McCollum (2012), "The consultation break was to facilitate the development of the intervention message and the homework task" (p. 9). The Hope-Scale, however, was a useful tool that provided continuity throughout the three sessions. It was easy to understand and gave both Mark and Julie an easy frame of reference for how they were doing as a couple.

This case study illustrated an approach taken by a chaplain to help a military couple reintegrate after a deployment. The flexible nature of the solution-focused approach presents a simple method in helping service members and their families get back on track with their lives. Chaplains and pastors can easily adapt the model into their pastoral care and counseling by integrating the principles of SF with the hope-focused spirituality incorporated by a biblical worldview (Kollar, 2011).

This thesis has outlined an approach to helping military couples who are experiencing post-deployment transitional stress. As a means of building family resilience, solution-focused therapy was the approach used throughout the case study. Since the couple were both committed Christians, I was able to integrate faith-related strengths and principles into the method. Lasting only three sessions, the brief nature of solution-focus therapy was also incorporated in the case study. SF gave me the framework from which to fall back on throughout the therapeutic process and help the couple get back on track. As a result of this study, I believe solution-focused therapy to be an approach with tremendous potential and application in military settings, useful for short term counseling, mentoring, and coaching.

APPENDIX



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VITA

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1992-1996: United States Marine Corps, Infantry, Corporal.

Personal Life

I met the love of my life, Dawn (Hopkins), one glorious Summer at high school band camp in 1990. We were united in holy matrimony on May 20, 1995. Our Heavenly Father has blessed us with three very unique children; Jacob, the tough guy Marine tanker, Dawson, a brainy science major at Bethel University (IN), and Hailey Laine, our beautiful artist and high schooler. As I close this chapter at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I am also closing the chapter of my career as a Navy Chaplain and will retire effective July 1, 2020. I am thankful for it all.